

Minutes



Meeting CORPORATE STRATEGY AND CO-ORDINATION STANDING
SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 10th May 2004 (commencing at 10.30 am)

membership

Persons absent are marked with `A`

COUNCILLORS

D E Pulk (Chair)

Tom Pettengell (Vice-Chair)

	Steve Carroll	A	K L O'Toole
A	G Gilfoyle		Mrs Sheila Place
A	Richard Jackson	A	Ray Poynter
	B Laughton		Maureen Tewson
	Ellie Lodziak		Y Woodhead
	J T A Napier		

CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The appointment by the County Council on 6th May 2004 of Councillor Darrell Pulk as Chair and Councillor Tom Pettengell as Vice-Chair of the Committee was noted.

MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes to the membership of the Committee.

MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 22nd March 2004, having been circulated, were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Councillor Glynn Gilfoyle*
“ Richard Jackson
“ K L O'Toole

* Denotes on other County Council business

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

None.

WHY CHANGE THE COUNCIL TAX SYSTEM?

Barry Dryden, Investment and Technical Officer, Resources Department, introduced the report which summarised the pressures on Council Tax, the calls for alternatives, and the Government's response. The Government was carrying out a "Balance of Funding Review", and the County Council's response to this consultation was included in the report. Councillor Pulk referred to the possibility of consulting people in Nottinghamshire through focus groups.

Councillor Laughton believed it was important for the Focus Groups to be informal, for it to be kept in mind that some service improvements were not funded by Government and that the County Council received less grant than other parts of the country. He emphasised that tight controls would be needed if the business rate was to be returned to local government control. Councillor Pulk indicated that the focus groups would have an independent facilitator. Councillor Woodhead knew of people who suffered hardship as a result of their determination to pay their Council Tax bill rather than be taken to court. Councillor Pettengell commented that in education, a lot of funding was going direct to schools, or being ring-fenced.

Councillor Napier commented on the County Council's response to the consultation. He believed it was essential for local government to be accountable. He saw ability to pay as being important, along with being able to see the benefit of local government spending. He did not see a link between the fairness of the local tax system and voting. Councillor Pulk indicated that the response had been produced by a cross-party working group, which had been endorsed by Cabinet as the County Council's response.

Alistair McGrady, Chief Executive's Department, stated that with the Committee's approval, focus groups were planned for early June in West Bridgford, Worksop and Southwell. Councillor Laughton observed the Council Tax was a direct tax which was being paid indirectly out of income which had already been taxed. Councillor Pulk pointed out that Council Tax had the advantage of being transparent. Councillor Tewson commented that there were many people who did not pay either Council Tax or Income Tax, but made use of public services.

It was agreed to carry out consultation and further work on the Council Tax, with a report being presented to the next meeting of the Committee on 21st June 2004.

DOMESTIC BURGLARY RATE – REPORT TO CABINET

Alistair McGrady introduced the report which summarized the Committee's findings during its scrutiny of performance against the Strategic Plan target for reducing domestic burglary rates.

Councillor Woodhead expressed disappointment that the police would only provide a shed alarm for an old person after they had been burgled. Councillor Pulk agreed that prevention was better than cure, and that this could be a threat for the proposed seminar. Councillor Lodziak commented that the Children's Fund could provide assistance support to projects in some areas. Councillor Laughton was disappointed with the Chief Constable's response to Dr Sutton's research on the market for stolen goods. Councillor Pettengell commented that there were many District Council initiatives in Broxtowe, and he wondered about similar activity in other Districts. Councillor Pulk suggested that the recommendation in relation to the seminar be amended, so that Cabinet ask the Select Committee to organise the seminar, given that the Select Committee already had the relevant contacts.

It was agreed that:

1. Cabinet consider how to raise the profile of crime and disorder reduction within the portfolio of the responsibilities of the Deputy Leader to give it similar prominence to Education, Social Services and the other portfolios.
2. Cabinet consider asking the Select Committee to arrange a Members Seminar to raise awareness of a range of community safety issues.
3. Nottinghamshire Crime and Disorder Partnerships should consider commissioning research into stolen goods markets.
4. The Committee discuss progress on burglary and crime reduction with the Chief Constable at its meeting on 11th October 2004.
5. That the report be submitted to the Cabinet on 26th May 2004 with a report back to the Select Committee.

CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES ARISING FROM CALL-IN

In the light of the recommendation from the Ad Hoc Select Committee – Call-In, it was agreed to establish a small study group to look at Call-In and make recommendations to the Select Committee and Standards Committee. The membership of the study group would be Councillors Pulk, Place, Pettengell, Laughton, one other Labour Group Member, and one Liberal Democrat.

REVIEW OF SERVICES FOR MEMBERS – PROGRESS REPORT

The report summarised progress in implementing the recommendations of the review of services for Members. Councillor Pulk was still unclear about the budget available for scrutiny. In reply to a question from Councillor Napier he explained how Members had been involved in the appointment of Head of Scrutiny, and in relation to office accommodation. Councillor Napier wondered whether there were sufficient people with expertise to solve Members' IT problems.

Councillor Pulk suggested a survey of Members to assess the extent of difficulties. Councillor Pettengell commented that the outcome of Members' training needs analyses was limited.

It was agreed to ask the Assistant Chief Executive to report to the Committee on the budget for scrutiny, Members' training and IT support, and to survey Members about their experience of IT support.

The meeting closed at 11.20 am

CHAIR