



Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on TUESDAY 13 JULY 1999 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor Long (Chair)
Councillor Miles (Vice-Chair)
Councillors Bartlett (substituting for Councillor Hopkins), Bristow, Edwards, Fairweather, E Henderson, I Henderson, Lloyd, Mabbutt, Swepston, Tallack, Turnbull, I Wilson and K Wilson

Officers: H Miller (Chief Executive), D Jones (Strategic Director, Neighbourhood Services), P Coveney (Strategic Director, Resources), J Stansfield (Strategic Director, Learning and Development), J Best (Strategic Director, Environment), J Pears (Head of Information Technology), J Moffoot (Head of Corporate Administration), M Jones (Head of Legal and Property Services), L McGillivray (Head of Policy and Communications), P Timmins (Treasurer), A Colyer (Assistant Treasurer (Corporate Finance)), M Hood (Assistant Treasurer (Audit and Customer Support)), G Snelson (Corporate Policy Manager), I Hart (Finance Manager, Resources) and I Reed (Senior Committee Manager)

Apology: Councillor Hopkins

Also Present: Councillors Barton, Morsley, O'Sullivan and Pym

PR7/00 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the following meetings be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record:

- (a) Policy and Resources Committee 3 February 1999
- (b) Special meetings of this Committee held on 15 April, 18 May and 29 June 1999

PR8/00 REPRESENTATION

- (a) Review of Sub-Committees

The Committee reviewed the need for the following Panels and Sub-Committees:

- (i) Members' Services Sub-Committee
- (ii) Finance and Property Protocols Sub-Committee

(iii) Mayor's Sub-Committee

(iv) Regeneration Panel

RESOLVED -

(i) That a Members' Services Sub-Committee be appointed in the ratio 4:2:1.

(ii) That the membership of the Sub-Committee be Councillors Day, Edwards, I Henderson, Hopkins, Long, Miles and Tallack.

(iii) That a Property Sub-Committee be appointed in the ratio 3:1:1.

(iv) That the membership of the Sub-Committee be Councillors Bartlett, Bristow, Fairweather, Lewis and Long.

(v) That the following Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee be approved:

(a) To agree a Property Asset Management Strategy for the Council.

(b) To oversee the Best Value Review of the Council's Property Services.

(c) To make decisions about the use of Council property when it is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was originally intended.

(d) To receive regular reports from the Capital Programme Working Group.

(vi) That no action be taken to reappoint the Mayor's Sub-Committee.

(vii) That a Regeneration Panel be re-appointed in the ratio 4:2:1.

(viii) That the Membership of the Panel be Councillors Bristow, Gillingham, E Henderson, Miles, Pendry, White and one additional Member of the Liberal Democrat Group.

(b) Partnerships/Consultative Assemblies

The Committee was requested to consider whether it would wish to establish any partnerships/consultative assemblies in addition to the Crime and Community Safety Partnership and the Anti-Poverty Forum which had been established at the special meeting of the Committee held on 18 May 1999.

The Committee was advised that Councillor Barton would be the Lead Member on the Voluntary Sector Consultative Assembly and Councillor Long would be the Lead Member on the Equalities Consultative Assembly. The Committee noted that all Members of the Council would be informed of meetings of the Consultative Assemblies.

(c) Violence Against Women and Children Working Group

RESOLVED -

That Councillor Barton be appointed to the Working Group.

PR9/00 LABOUR PARTY MANIFESTO

RESOLVED -

That the Labour Party Manifesto 1999 be adopted.

(Councillors Fairweather, E Henderson, I Henderson, Mabbutt, Tallack and I Wilson requested their votes against the resolution be recorded).

PR10/00 GENERAL FUND REVENUE OUTTURN 1998/99

In accordance with Minutes PR130/99, CL81/99 and PR13/99 the Committee considered the provisional General Fund Revenue outturn figures for 1998/99.

RESOLVED -

That this Committee notes the provisional Revenue Outturn compared to budgets for 1998/99 and its effect on the level of reserves.

PR11/00 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - 1999/2000 AND LATER YEARS

The Committee considered the latest forecast outturn against 1999/2000 budget and the continuation budget and resources for 2000/01 and 2001/02. The Committee noted that unless action was taken, the Council would be unable to deliver its planned budget outcome of having £3m of balances at March 2000. It further noted that the change in the targets for later year budgets in 2000/01 and 2001/02 assumed a 5% increase in Council Tax.

The Committee was advised that the Community Learning Committee at its meeting held on 6 July 1999 had considered a report on that Committee's provisional outturn for the financial year 1998/99 and had requested this Committee to approve the roll forward of certain identified budgets. The Community Learning Committee had also considered a report on the latest position on the forecast against budget on the current financial year and had asked this Committee to consider the areas for budget reduction and variation for the Revenue Budget in 1999/2000.

Councillor K Wilson moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Long, and on which a recorded vote was requested:

“That this Committee:

- (a) Notes the latest expenditure projections for the current financial year and the two subsequent years, together with projections of available resources, as set out in Annex A (1-2) of the report.
- (b) Agrees the additional expenditure for 1999/2000 as set out as Annex B to the report.

- (c) Agrees the schedule of savings for 1999/2000 as set out at Annex C to the report.
- (d) Incorporates the effects of Annexes B and C into the latest approved budget for 1999/2000.
- (e) Instructs service committees to increase their discretionary fees and charges by an average of 6% from 1 October 1999 excluding nursery and music charges, car parking charges and concessionary bus fares.
- (f) Instructs officers to report back at an autumn meeting of the Committee with further options to help deliver the overall budget objective.
- (g) Notes that a paper is being prepared on a longer term budgeting strategy that will be presented to the September meeting of this Committee.
- (h) Considers the potential, given the three year freeze on SSA methodology, to realise the benefits of medium term planning by determining a budget for the year 2000/01 in the autumn of this year.
- (i) Notes and welcomes the £9.4m increases in the budget from 1998/99 to 1999/2000 in line with the Council's commitment."

Councillor I Henderson moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Mabbutt, and on which a recorded vote was requested:

"That the following words be added:

- (j) That this Committee regrets the Labour Administration's inability to take a longer than three month view of the Council's budget and invites the Leadership to bring a robust three year service and financial plan to the next meeting of this Committee."

The voting on the amendment was as follows:

FOR: Councillors Bartlett, Fairweather, E Henderson, I Henderson, Mabbutt, Tallack and I Wilson (7)

AGAINST: Councillors Bristow, Edwards, Lloyd, Long, Miles, Swepston, Turnbull and K Wilson (8)

The amendment was declared lost.

RESOLVED -

1. That this Committee notes the latest expenditure projections for the current financial year and the two subsequent years, together with projections of available resources, as set out in Annex A (1-2) to the Minutes.
2. That the additional expenditure for 1999/2000 as set out at Annex B to the Minutes be agreed.
3. That the schedule of savings for 1999/2000 as set out at Annex C to the Minutes be agreed.

4. That the effects of Annexes B and C be incorporated into the latest approved budget for 1999/2000.
5. That service committees be instructed to increase their discretionary fees and charges by an average of 6% from 1 October 1999 excluding nursery and music charges, car parking charges and concessionary bus fares.
6. That officers report back at an autumn meeting of the Committee with further options to help deliver the overall budget objective.
7. That this Committee notes that a paper is being prepared on a longer term budgeting strategy that will be presented to the September meeting of this Committee.
8. That this Committee considers the potential, given the three year freeze on SSA methodology, to realise the benefits of medium term planning by determining a budget for the year 2000/01 in the autumn of this year.
9. That this Committee notes and welcomes the £9.4m increases in the budget from 1998/99 to 1999/2000 in line with the Council's commitment.
10. That the Community Learning Committee's request to this Committee for approval of the roll forward of budgets as set out in the annex to the report be noted.
11. That the areas for consideration for budget reduction and variation for the revenue budget in 1999/2000 be noted

PR12/00

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 1998/99 - 1999/2000

The Committee considered the projected capital outturn for 1998/99 and the implications for the Council's 1999/2000 Programme and the implications of the introduction of asset management planning for the Council. It was noted that the 1998/99 Capital Programme had underspent by £3.3m primarily as a result of slippage and two out of the five capital blocks still required their programmes for 1999/2000 to be agreed. The Committee noted that the Secretary of State for Education and Employment had not yet agreed the sale of the Denbigh School site and if the sale was not completed in the financial year it would jeopardise the Council's ability to finance the 1999/2000 programme.

The Committee was also advised that the Community Learning Committee, at its meeting on 5 July 1999, had considered a report on its capital outturn for the financial year 1998/99 and it had requested this Committee to earmark, £1,425,000 to support the Community Learning Committee's capital programme in future years as this represented the value of the net underspend excluding capitalised revenue. It was also reported that the Community Learning Committee had considered a report on the latest projections and issues in respect of its Capital Programme as a consequence of the 1998/99 outturn. The Policy and Resources Committee had been requested to approve the Community Learning Committee's revised Capital Programme.

RESOLVED -

1. That the projected capital outturn figures for 1998/99 be noted.
2. That the prioritised schemes identified (£0.827m) be noted and the officers be instructed to review the priorities and report to this Committee in September 1999 when the outcome of the Denbigh School site and other issues should be resolved.
3. That the alternative funding sources identified for specific schemes (£0.118m) be agreed.
4. That the revised selection criteria for capital schemes for 2000/01 be agreed subject to any overriding resolution or determination by this Committee.
5. That the revenue implications of the DfEE's regulations on asset management planning be noted.
6. That the requests of the Community Learning Committee be deferred until the next meeting of this Committee.

PR13/00 SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES

Further to Minute PR15/99 the Committee received a report which set out developments since the publication of the Social Services White Paper 'Modernising Social Services', the latest response to the recommendations of the local SSI report, and the Local Social Care Key Performance Indicators as of 1 June 1999.

The Committee discussed the action taken by officers to produce information leaflets for the public and the work that had commenced on developing the reception facilities at Saxon Court.

RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

PR14/00 EQUALITIES AUDIT AND STEPHEN LAWRENCE INQUIRY

The Committee considered a process for considering the Equalities Audit Report and the production of an Action Plan. The Committee noted that in 1997 the Council had adopted the Commission for Racial Equality's standard for local government. In doing so it had decided that the scope of the standard should be widened to embrace gender and disability issues. In February 1999, Jean Kelly Consultancy had been appointed to undertake an audit of the Council's current position against the expanded standard. A detailed report had been circulated in the Committee's News for members.

The Committee also considered a report on the findings of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the Home Office response to it. The Committee was also invited to consider the draft Action Plan in response to the Inquiry recommendations which was discussed at a special meeting of the Crime and Community Safety Partnership on 2 July 1999.

RESOLVED -

1. That the completion of the Equalities Audit be noted.
2. That the positive progress being made towards Level 3 of the Standard be noted.
3. That the following action be taken in considering the report and developing an Action Plan in discussion with all services and relevant external agencies:
 - (i) the audit report and suggested actions are widely circulated amongst Members and officers;
 - (ii) discussions, workshops or briefings are held to consider the audit and suggested actions and devise clear corporate and directorate action plans;
 - (iii) relevant organisations are consulted and involved in the development of all action plans, in particular the Racial Equality Council, the Council of Disabled People and Unison; and
 - (iv) the final plans are widely circulated to officers and Members and made available to the public.
4. That a Member Panel be established to monitor and ensure the early implementation of the recommendations contained in the Equalities Audit and the Action Plan arising from the Stephen Lawrence report and related issues, and that the Panel report back to the next meeting of this Committee on the representation from the wider community and the Terms of Reference it will need to carry out its work to the maximum effect.
5. That the Panel reports back regularly on progress made to this Committee including an annual report.
6. That the Panel be set up on the ratio 2:2:1.
7. That Councillors Edwards, Long, Seymour and I Wilson and a representative of the Conservative Group be appointed to the Panel.

PR15/00 COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP - ASSOCIATE PIONEER PILOT PROJECT

The Committee considered a report which sought the Committee's endorsement of the Council's involvement in the Milton Keynes Community Legal Service Associate Pioneer Pilot Project. The Committee was advised that Milton Keynes was one of only 7 local authorities in the south east to be chosen to pilot preparation for this service. It was further reported that an Action Plan for the first year until April 2000 had been drafted to develop and create proposals.

Councillor I Henderson moved the following motion, seconded by Councillor I Wilson:

"That this Council's involvement in the Community Legal Service Associate Pioneer Pilot Project is endorsed, provided that it is fully funded from outside sources."

On being put to the vote, the motion was declared lost.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Council's involvement in the Community Legal Service Associate Pioneer Pilot project is endorsed.
2. That the progress to date on implementing the Associate Pioneer initiative be noted.
3. That the next steps of the initiative, as detailed in the Action Plan, be supported

PR17/00 ASBESTOS IN COUNCIL BUILDINGS

The Committee considered a report which set out the need to undertake measures to comply with the Council's statutory Health and Safety obligations with respect to asbestos.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Action Plan and associated timescales as set out in the report be approved.
2. That the proposed Corporate Asbestos Policy be approved.
3. That the detailed implementation of the Action Plan be overseen by the Property Sub-Committee within the budget guideline figure of £134,000.

PR18/00 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN

Further to the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission held on 8 June 1999 (Minute S12/00 refers), the Committee considered a report on establishing a process for ensuring that Members of the Council's views were taken into account when the District Auditor prepared his Audit Plan each year.

It was reported that the Scrutiny Commission had decided that it should be informed of the process for the adoption of the External Audit Plan for 1999/2000 particularly with regard to the input of Members into the Plan and it had requested a report to be submitted to its next meeting on a process for the adoption of future external Audit Plans which allowed the Scrutiny Commission an input into the process.

RESOLVED -

That the process for ensuring Members' views are taken into account when the District Auditor prepares his plan each year should be taken in the following two stages:

- (a) a report to the November meeting of the Scrutiny Commission for initial comments and views; and
- (b) the views of the Scrutiny Commission, together with those of officers then being reported to the February meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration before this Committee agrees the final plan.

PR19/00

MILLENNIUM ISSUES (NON IT) ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered progress made to date on the Council's preparedness for the Millennium.

It was reported that the Council was following the Audit Commission's process but that there was not a consistent approach and/or support to ensure all objectives were being achieved. However, the Council was progressing well and needed to remain focused to maintain detailed monitoring of the process in order to be fully committed to its completion.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Strategic Director Resources, in conjunction with the Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee, be delegated the authority to make decisions over the next six months.
2. That the Council's commitment to completing its preparations to ensure that 'Due Diligence' is observed, be confirmed.
3. That the Policy and Resources Committee be requested to consider the Union's submission for additional payments for staff required to work over the Millennium period once the staffing requirements have been identified.
4. That this Committee be kept informed of the progress being made and that any difficulties in funding be reported to this Committee for discussion.

PR20/00

REVISED RATES OF FOSTER CARE ALLOWANCES

The Committee considered a request from the meeting of the Community Learning Committee held on 6 April 1999 that the associated funding for the proposed revised rates of foster care allowances be referred to this Committee for consideration.

RESOLVED -

That the referral to this Committee be noted.

PR21/00

ACCOMMODATION

The Committee was advised that the Personnel Committee at its special meeting held on 15 April 1999 had considered a report which set out the action being taken by officers to implement the accommodation requirements of the Council in the light of recent budget decisions, and had referred to this Committee a series of proposals relating to the Sports and Social Club and the marketing of Council facilities for function use.

The Committee was advised that the views of the Sports and Social Club and Synergy Catering had now been sought on the future marketing and management arrangements at the Civic Offices.

RESOLVED -

That in view of the joint views of the Sports and Social Club and Synergy regarding the future marketing and management of functions, this Committee agrees that the use of the Civic Offices for functions continues to be managed by the Corporate Administration Division in conjunction with the Sports and Social Club and Synergy Catering and that the use of the bar area continue to be monitored with a view to financial provision for refurbishment being included in the budget consideration for 2000/01, if necessary.

PR22/00

ENFORCING THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION

The Committee considered a recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission at its meeting on 8 June 1999 that the budget of £30,000 allocated for additional support for the Scrutiny Commission be used to create a dedicated officer post and that the balance of any budget remaining be used to support other work relating to the Scrutiny function.

RESOLVED -

That the recommendation of the Scrutiny Commission be noted.

PR23/00

MILTON KEYNES COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG PERSONS SERVICE PLAN UPDATE AND REVIEW

The Committee was advised that the Community Learning Committee at its meeting on 6 April 1999 (Minute CO47/99 refers), was presented with the Review and Update Plan 1999 - 2001.

RESOLVED -

That this Committee endorses the Community Learning Committee's approval, as a working document, of the Update and Review Plan 1999/2001 of the Milton Keynes Community Children's and Young People's Service Plan 1998 - 2001.

PR24/00

THEATRE AND GALLERY FINANCIAL REPORT

The Committee was advised that the Theatre and Gallery Development Sub-Committee at its meeting held on 2 June 1999 (Minute TG6/00 refers) had considered a report on the project's capital budget and the options for the management of the multi-storey car park.

The Policy and Resources Committee had been recommended to authorise the Sub-Committee to explore the options outlined in the report submitted to it and had requested that a detailed report be submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 13 July 1999.

The Committee noted that no report was available for the meeting, but that detailed discussions were now taking place regarding the project.

RESOLVED -

That a special meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee be held in the next few weeks to consider a report on the project's capital budget and the options for the management of the multi-storey car park.

PR25/00

HOUSING CONDITION SURVEY

The Committee was advised that the Neighbourhood Services Committee at its meeting held on 7 July 1999 (Minute NS13/00 refers), had sought approval to employ 5 members of staff for 6 months to carry out a stock condition survey of both private and Council housing properties and had sought the approval of the Policy and Resources Committee to provide a supplementary estimate of £27,000 to be allocated from the General Fund as a contribution to the cost of the survey.

RESOLVED -

That the Neighbourhood Services Committee be advised that this Committee supports the undertaking of a stock condition survey of both private and Council housing properties subject to the Neighbourhood Services Committee funding the survey from its own resources.

PR26/00

PROBATE OFFICE FOR MILTON KEYNES

At the request of Councillor Barton the Committee discussed a proposal to lobby the Lord Chancellor's Office to locate a probate office in Milton Keynes.

RESOLVED -

That representations be made to the Lord Chancellor's Office to locate a probate office in Milton Keynes.

PR27/00 SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES

At the request of Councillor E Henderson, the Committee discussed the allocation of Special Responsibility Allowances. Councillor E Henderson requested the Leader of the Council to present revised proposals for Special Responsibility Allowances for 1999/2000, and the Committee to set up an independent panel to review Members' allowances from 2000/01 onwards.

RESOLVED -

That the Members' Services Sub-Committee be asked to look at the various issues relating to Members' Allowances.

PR28/00 EARLY RETIREMENT

RESOLVED -

That consideration of this item be deferred to the special meeting of the Committee to be arranged within the next few weeks.

PR29/00 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REGULATION AND INSPECTION UNIT

The Committee discussed the annual report of the Regulation and Inspection Unit as set out in the Committee's News for Members.

RESOLVED -

That the report be welcomed.

PR30/00 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED -

That the public and press representatives be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 9 (Contracts) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 in order that the Committee may consider the following matter:

Bletchley Leisure Centre and Sycamore Club - Tender Evaluation

PR31/00 BLETCHLEY LEISURE CENTRE AND SYCAMORE CLUB - TENDER EVALUATION

In accordance with Minute C88/99 of the Community Committee held on 8 June 1999, the Committee considered a report on the outcome of the tender evaluation for the management of Bletchley Leisure Centre and the Sycamore Club.

RESOLVED -

That the reduced tender from the Relaxion Group plc in the revised sum of £360,361 per year for a 12 year contract commencing 1 December 1999 be accepted, including the agreement of all the following conditions:

- (a) to allow early access to the Centre to complete certain outstanding capital works before the contract begins;

- (b) to allow an option to operate the areas previously identified for mothballing; and
- (c) to profile the payments across the contract in order to obtain the savings necessary.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 11.40PM