

## PARISHES OPEN EVENING

21 AUGUST 2001

### Feedback from Discussion Tables

#### Tables A & B - Landscaping

**Split too close...**Concern that the proposed "soft split" arrangements might not provide the appropriate level of independent scrutiny.

The proposal was explained in more detail with an emphasis put on the separate reporting channels within Tech Services and the completely separate position of the Strategic Client. The respective functions of the two offices were outlined and a written version provided to take away for consideration prior to responding.

#### Greater Involvement

A commonly expressed view that there was not enough involvement by parishes in the whole process from contract preparation to the ongoing "on the ground" service.....

It was emphasised by officers that the wish is for parishes to play a greater role in all aspects of the service although it is recognised that the level of involvement will vary from one parish to another.....A number of key stages were identified....pre-contract discussion to up-date and iron out any anomalies from present contracts.....determination of specifications.....tender evaluation [MEAT analysis] .....liaison with dedicated supervisory officer and the Strategic Client as appropriate.....parish ongoing "client/customer" role.....

It was also mentioned that the proposals will seek a pro-active and creative role from parishes and that this level of involvement was considerably more than a casual or ad hoc interest...This represents a considerably enhanced role and level of commitment for all parties.

#### Quality/Consistency of Service

Reference made to the QA system in place in the Tech Services and intention to extend.....emphasis given to the face to face contact and early reporting/response opportunities afforded by the proposals ... the working relationship between parishes and the Council.....the position of the Strategic Client as the final arbiter of performance standard against the specification. Proposals would be reviewed over the initial 12 months [being one full season] and beyond if required

## **Apparent Secrecy**

A wish to be more informed and aware of the financial processes associated with the contract procurement and delivery processes.....Officers suggested that this need not be "secret" and that there is an opportunity for more "openness" throughout the whole system.

## **Request for Specialist Expertise/Advice**

Arboriculture was specifically mentioned by parish reps as an area where much was needed in order to enable a more pro-active approach to trees and their management/resources need to be found to provide this function within the strategic client section. Play area expertise will be available within the Tech Services, other advice on landscape matters is available through the strategic client or contract supervisors.

## **Commuted Lump Sums**

For POS adoption.....Where are they?....there is now the means by which CLS's can be retained within Environment and directed towards the intended site maintenance. The mechanism needs to be formally established.

## **Cleansing Standard**

Reported as a problem on landscaped areas but acknowledged as improving.

## **Parish/Contract Boundaries**

The move is to have contracts coincide with parishes or groups of parishes.

## **Visits to MKC Premises**

To see each side of the enterprise "in action"...can be arranged.

## **"Plain English"**

A request for assistance since contract language not always properly understood.....explanation and "interpretation" of specification can be provided as an aid to assist.

## **"Forgotten Areas"**

Recognised that areas are sometimes left out for a variety of reasons.....Accepted....The adoption process is too complex to explain in the short time available but could be the subject of future meetings...parishes may be able to assist in the process.

## **Training**

Need to develop appropriate training programmes for all involved parties.

## **Local Composting**

Could the cuttings be picked up and composted locally.....cost of pick up is prohibitive but ideas could spring from the principle of local composting.

## **Table C - New Democratic Structures/Area Forums**

### **Organisation of Area Forums**

Should include only elected representatives, co-optees have no responsibilities.  
Should be non-political.

Its purpose must be clearly explained.

### **Link to Milton Keynes Council**

The committee timetable and Milton Keynes Council's processes must be integrated with the Area Forums

### **Is There a Need?**

Could lead to overlap and duplication and will place extra demands on Parish Councils

### **Budget Devolution**

Is there any prospect?

### **Must be Fully Resourced**

Parish Councillors will need training.

### **Groupings**

By Geography or Common Interests

## **Table D - S136 and The Protocol**

**The s136 process had already been explained earlier therefore discussion centred on the Protocol**

### **What Is It?**

Some had never seen the Protocol document or knew of its existence. All were handed copies.

## **Updating of the Document**

As the document was written in 1997, it was generally agreed that the detail needs amending to reflect the current position and future provision. Officer recommendations should be made to the s136 Committee but all Parishes should be consulted on the suggested amendments.

## **Format and Regularity of Meetings**

Meetings should be held on a separate night to the Parish Assembly and every other month if required.

## **Agendas**

Agendas should reflect the requirements of the Protocol.

## **Communication**

General agreement that MKC sends out much information- but rarely in an understandable format. Mechanisms should be found to improve on this if we (MKC) want meaningful dialogue.

# **Areas of Potential for S136**

## **Table E - Play Areas/Cemeteries/Allotments and Dog Waste Bins**

### **Play Areas**

General Interest in inclusion in s136. This would maintain economies of scale, expertise in inspection, maintenance and overseeing of contracts. Needs to tie in with additional funding for refurbishment and resurfacing together with the creation of a special dedicated "Parish Play Area Fund" separate from existing parish partnership fund.

### **Allotments**

Agreed that these should transfer to s136 but contract back to MKC to arrange lettings.

### **Cemeteries**

Maintenance can be included in s136, but there is an issue of legality if Parishes wished to restrict occupation to solely their own Parishioners.

### **Dog Waste Bins**

Agreed these should be under s136 providing the service and number of locations improve/increase.

## **Table F - Crime and Community Safety**

### **Raising of Priorities**

Regarding Quality of Life issues such as Anti Social Behaviour and vandalism and working in partnership to reduce and manage them.

### **Developing Local Points**

Reporting issues to known and recognised points of service.

### **Use of Neighbourhood/Parish Wardens**

To link closely with police/council, health etc.

### **Enhanced Communication**

Both into and out of the local parishes-easier access to council and police by e-mail

### **Local Ownership of Problems**

Not moving them on to other areas.

**The above comments will be fed into the planning process for the CCSP**

## **Table G - Community Buildings and Management of Sports Facilities. The Youth Service**

### **Involvement in Local Services**

Extra Involvement could help to stimulate a sense of involvement/community being actively involved in the provision of services within their parish.

### **Parishioners Pay more?**

Already pay Council Tax then pay additional sum on precept.

### **Transparency in Figures**

Especially community managed.

### **Imbalances**

No Facilities in Rural Areas.

### **Lighter Touch Needed**

Than direct lease/freehold.

## **Acknowledgement**

Of Parish differences.

**N.B. There was no discussion feedback on Youth Matters or Sports Ground Management**