



Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 1999 at 7.30 pm

**Present:** Councillor Miles (Vice-Chair in the Chair)  
Councillors Bristow, Edwards, Fairweather, Gibbs (substitute for Councillor Long), E Henderson, I Henderson, Hopkins, Lloyd, Mabbutt, Stanyer (substitute for Councillor Turnbull), Swepston, Tallack, 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), P Timmins (Treasurer), M Hood (Assistant Treasurer (Audit and Customer Support)), G Snelson (Corporate Policy Manager), I Hart (Finance Manager (Resources)), J Howe (Finance Manager (Capital and Treasury)) and I Reed (Senior Committee Manager)

**Apologies:** Councillors Long and Turnbull

**Also Present:** Councillors Barton, Burke and Woodcock

**PR39/00 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 - 13 July 1999; and
- (b) special meeting of Policy and Resources Committee - 3 August 1999.

**PR40/00 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In accordance with Section 94 of the Local Government Act 1972, the following declared interests:

Councillor K Wilson declared a non-pecuniary interest in the proposal to install CCTV cameras at the Coffee Hall Local Centre.

Councillor Fairweather declared a pecuniary interest during discussions on Council Tax Billing Arrangements and the Joint Fire Authority Levy.

The Head of Corporate Administration declared a pecuniary interest in the item on Special Payments for Millennium Working.

**PR41/00**

### **CCTV CAMERAS - COFFEE HALL LOCAL CENTRE**

At the request of Councillors Coventry, Long and K Wilson, the Committee considered a request to assist Woughton Parish Council in its intention to purchase and provide CCTV cameras at the Coffee Hall Local Centre, by agreeing to the installation of the cameras on its property and to adopt ownership of them, and arrange for the payment of the running costs and maintenance of the cameras.

The Committee was advised that the Crime and Community Safety Partnership had agreed to develop a borough wide strategy for the provision and maintenance of CCTV cameras.

RESOLVED -

1. That the scheme for CCTV for Coffee Hall Local Centre, to be funded by Woughton Parish Council, be approved.
2. That this Committee notes that the Crime and Community Safety Partnership is developing a borough wide strategy on the provision of CCTV cameras, and that further consideration of proposals be deferred until the strategy is approved.

**PR42/00**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ORGANISATION AND STANDARDS) BILL**

The Committee considered a report which set out the provisions of the draft Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill.

The Committee was advised that the draft Bill sought to achieve changes in the political management structures in local authorities, and to introduce improved procedures to ensure the maintenance of high ethical standards.

Each authority would be required to draw up a scheme to identify how its functions would be discharged under its chosen model, and that the arrangements must include provision for one or more overview and scrutiny committees.

The Committee noted that there was no firm indication as to when the draft legislation would be formally presented to Parliament.

The Committee was invited to consider whether it would wish to proceed with a scheme that would be a move towards the requirements of the draft Bill.

In considering the issue, the Committee noted the outcome of discussions between the Group Leaders, which identified such issues as the implementation of a new structure within the current Council year, Group Leaders continuing to

meet to oversee the change process, the use of focus groups/juries and the establishment of the scrutiny role of Members.

The Committee also discussed the outcome of a seminar on the issues, which had been held on Friday 10 September 1999.

RESOLVED -

1. That the activities which have taken place so far, to commence the process arising from the draft Local Government (Organisation and Standards) Bill, in relation to political management arrangements, be endorsed.
2. That the process set out by Group Leaders, be approved.
3. That a Member Working Group be set up to steer forward the Council's work on new political structures.
4. That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, agree the ratio, composition and Terms of Reference of the Working Group.

## **PR43/00**

### **MULTI-YEARS BUDGETING**

The Committee considered a report which set out a framework for the Council's budgeting processes.

The approach embraced the Council's budgeting process for revenue and capital, to accommodate Best Value and policy developments, as well as increasing the financial responsibility of managers.

The Committee noted that the framework included provision for Multi-Years Budgeting, Best Value and Service Level Agreements, carry forwards which related to departments' annual financial performances and virements.

The Committee was also advised that a number of public budget consultation meetings had been arranged for September 1999, relating to budget issues for 2000/01.

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

- “1. That the Committee agrees to:
- (a) begin the budget process earlier;
  - (b) apply the same process to revenue [General Fund and Housing Revenue Account] and capital;
  - (c) develop cost centre revenue responsibility;
  - (d) incorporate policy into the budget planning process; and
  - (e) continue to improve consultation with public.

2. That the introduction of a comprehensive Service Level Agreements process, as set out in the timetable in the report, be approved.
3. That approval be given to between-year transfers to apply, starting with the 1999-2000 outturn and that when finances allow, there is a regime of investment to produce savings, via 'cost centre borrowing' and 'repayment'.
4. That the new virement rules be approved.
5. That full consultation with the public take place on the budget proposals when published."

Councillor K Wilson moved the following amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Bristow:

"That 5 be amended to read 'That the budget consultation arrangements already in place for the 2000/01 budget, be noted and supported'."

On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Committee agrees to:
  - (a) begin the budget process earlier;
  - (b) apply the same process to revenue [General Fund and Housing Revenue Account] and capital;
  - (c) develop cost centre revenue responsibility;
  - (d) incorporate policy into the budget planning process; and
  - (e) continue to improve consultation with the public.
2. That the introduction of a comprehensive Best Value and Service Level Agreements process, as set out in the timetable in the report, be approved.
3. That approval be given to between-year transfers to apply, starting with the 1999-2000 outturn and that when finances allow, there is a regime of investment to produce savings, via 'cost centre borrowing' and 'repayment'.
4. That the new virement rules be approved.
5. That the budget consideration arrangement already in place for the 2000/01 budget, be noted and supported.

## **PR44/00**

### **CAPITAL PROGRAMME 1999/2000 - 2000/01**

The Committee considered proposals for the 1999/2000 and 2000/01 Capital Programme, and the implications of the latest guidance on the single capital pot.

In accordance with the decision made at the meeting of the Committee held on 13 July 1999 (Minute PR12/00 refers), the report contained information about the Denbigh School site and reviewed the £0.827 million of prioritised schemes.

The Committee was reminded that at Minute PR11/00, the Committee had agreed that the potential to realise the benefits of medium term planning, be considered by determining the 2000/01 budget in the Autumn of this year.

The Committee noted that the report provided a framework for incorporating the 2000/01 Capital Programme in to the process.

RESOLVED -

That the continued funding pressures on the 1999/2000 programme be noted, and officers be instructed to review the position and report back in November 1999 and to prioritise bids for the 2000/01 programme for circulation to Members by 18 September 1999.

## **PR45/00**

### **CITIZENS SURVEY AND CONSULTATION STRATEGY**

The Committee considered a report on progress in commissioning a citizens survey and developing a corporate consultation strategy.

The Committee was advised that the Scrutiny Commission had considered the report at its meeting held on 8 September 1999, and the Chair of the Scrutiny Commission reported on its comments.

The Committee noted a tendering process had been undertaken for a contract to carry out a citizens survey and establish a 1,000 person strong standing panel.

The Committee also noted that a process was required for approving the survey questionnaire and a range of options had been included in the report.

The Committee was also invited to comment on suggestions for a corporate consultation strategy.

RESOLVED -

1. That the comments of the Scrutiny Commission be noted and welcomed.
2. That the progress made in commissioning a citizens survey and standing panel, be noted.
3. That the survey questionnaire be approved by an all party Working Group, set up in the ratio 2:1:1.
4. That the Working Group comprise Councillors Fairweather, Miles, K Wilson and a representative of the Conservative group.
5. That the approach to a consultation strategy, set out in the report, be endorsed.
6. That a formal strategy document be prepared and submitted to the November meeting of this Committee.

(The Committee adjourned during consideration of the above Item, to hear the views of a member of the public.)

**PR46/00 SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES**

Further to Minute PR15/99, the Committee received a report which set out some Government announcements with implications for Milton Keynes, as well as reporting on local issues, including the performance of some key services.

RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

(The Committee adjourned during consideration of the above Item, to hear the views of a member of the public.)

**PR47/00 MILTON KEYNES INTER-AGENCY CODE OF PRACTICE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The Committee considered the proposed Milton Keynes Inter-Agency Code of Practice on Domestic Violence.

It was reported that the Code of Practice would enable all key agencies in Milton Keynes to adopt and promote an integrated approach to addressing domestic violence.

The Committee noted that the Code was the result of inter-agency working, promoted by the Violence Against Women and Children Working Party.

RESOLVED -

That the Code of Practice be approved and endorsed by this Committee.

**PR48/00 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 1999/2000 AND LATER YEARS**

The Committee considered a report which provided the latest update on the three year forecast of the continuation budget against likely resources.

The Committee noted that the level of predicted reserves, as at 31 March 2000, had improved by £606,000 from the level reported at the July meeting, but also noted that there were identified budget pressures building in the Children's placement budgets, which could possibly offset the increased level of reserves.

RESOLVED -

1. That the updated forecast be noted.
2. That a further report be submitted to the special meeting of the Committee, to be held in October 1999.

**PR49/00 REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX BILLING ARRANGEMENTS**

The Committee considered a report which set out the feasibility of bringing forward the instalment date for collecting Council Tax to the first of each month, with effect from 1 April 2000.

It was also proposed to change the layout of the Council Tax bill, to show the amounts of Council Tax payable to Parish and Neighbourhood Councils separately on the bills.

The Committee noted that by bringing the instalment date forward from the eighth of the month to the first of the month, the Council could generate additional interest in the region of £10,000 per annum, and the recovery processes for unpaid Council Tax could commence earlier.

It was also considered that the breakdown of Council Tax payable into its different component parts would assist the public in understanding that there were also precepting and levying organisations that made up the final Council Tax payment.

The Committee considered the widest amount of consultation was required on this, and it noted the advice of the Treasurer that it was considered unlikely that such proposals would have a detrimental effect on Direct Debit Council Tax payers.

**RESOLVED -**

1. That the change of instalment date for Council Tax collection from the eighth day of the month to the first day of the month (April to January inclusive), to commence on 1 April 2000, subject to discussions about the practicalities with Parish and Neighbourhood Councils, be approved.
2. That the changed layout to the Council Tax bill, so as to show the amounts payable to Parish and Neighbourhood Councils and other precepting and levying organisations separately from the Milton Keynes Council precept, with effect from 2000/01, be approved, subject to consultation with such organisations.
3. That the date of the March Council meeting be brought forward to 1 March 2000.

**PR50/00**

**TREASURY MANAGEMENT - OPERATIONAL REPORT FOR 1998/99**

The Committee considered a report which set out the Council's performance in relation to its borrowing and investment strategy for 1998/99.

It was also reported that the Council's Treasury and Management Advisors had examined the Council's Treasury function during the course of the year.

The report, in terms of performance and strategy, had been favourable. A number of recommendations had been taken on board, and proposed amendments to the Council's Treasury Management Policy document had been submitted for consideration by the Committee.

RESOLVED -

That the Council's borrowing and investment performance in 1998/99, be noted, and that the amendment to the Council's Treasury Management Policy document, be approved.

**PR51/00**

**MILLENNIUM ISSUES**

(a) Information Technology Update

The Committee considered a report which set out the progress made in preparing the Council's Information Technology systems for the Millennium.

RESOLVED -

That the progress made to date be noted.

(b) Non IT Action Plan

The Committee considered an update report on the Council's progress towards Millennium compliance, both for its own services and throughout the community.

RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

(c) Special Payments

The Committee considered a report which considered the feasibility of providing additional financial recognition to staff, either rostered to work over the Millennium period or required to be on formal standby.

The Committee noted that other public sector bodies were considering such payments, and that additional payments of £50 for those on standby, rising to a total of £100 for those working in the period from 6.00 pm on 31 December 1999 to 6.00 pm on 1 January 2000, would require funding of around £25,000, which would be found from current budgets. It was considered that such figures were similar to those being considered by other public bodies.

The Committee was advised that the Council's Unions had been consulted on the issue, and it was reported that the Unions would not be satisfied with such an offer, because it was their contention that other authorities were considering larger payments for staff working, or on standby, during the Millennium period.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Unions be advised that this Council is not opposed to undertaking further negotiations with the Unions on the level of special Millennium payments for staff required to work or be on standby for that period, but feels that the proposed additional payments are reasonable.
2. That additional payments of £50 for those staff on standby, rising to a total of £100 for those staff working over the period from 6.00 pm on 31 December 1999 to 6.00 pm on 1 January 2000, be approved, and the payments be funded from the current budgets.

**PR52/00**

**DELEGATION TO OFFICERS - REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS**

Further to the meeting of the Committee held on 15 September 1998 (Minute PR63/99 refers), the Committee considered a report which reviewed the reporting arrangements for decisions taken by officers under Delegated Powers.

The Committee noted that the arrangements had now been operating for nearly 12 months, and only two decisions had been called in for consideration by Committee.

RESOLVED -

1. That the reporting arrangements for decisions be revised and the following tests be applied:
  - (a) The Calling-In Procedure should not be used if:
    - (i) the decision would require a change in policy;
    - (ii) within normal virement rules, no or insufficient budget is available;
    - (iii) the decision will have a significant effect on the work of another service; and
    - (iv) the decision is of a purely procedural nature.
  - (b) The Calling-In Procedure should be used if:
    - (i) the officer has delegated powers;
    - (ii) the decision does not require a change in policy;
    - (iii) sufficient budget is available within virement rules etc;
    - (iv) the decision will not have a significant effect on the work of another service;
    - (v) the decision complies with Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and the Contracts Framework;

- (vi) the decision is likely to be of interest to the public, Parish or Neighbourhood Councils; and
  - (vii) the matter is considered by the officer to be of a sensitive nature.
2. That Chairs, Lead Members and Ward Members be consulted whenever the officer concerned considers it appropriate to do so.

**PR53/00 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 1998/99**

The Committee considered the Statement of Accounts for 1998/99.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Statement of Accounts for 1998/99, be formally approved.
2. That the technical adjustment required in relation to internal accruals, which reduces the General Fund Balances at 31 March 1999, but restores them during 1999/2000, be noted.

**PR54/00 ROLE AND CRITERIA FOR HONORARY ALDERMEN**

The Committee considered a report which proposed a review for the criteria for granting former Members of the Council the title of Honorary Aldermen, and consider a possible future role for the Council's Aldermen.

Councillor E Henderson moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor I Henderson:

“That consideration of the new criteria for the appointment to the position of Honorary Aldermen, be deferred for further consideration at the next meeting of the Committee.”

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

RESOLVED -

That the recommendations contained in the report be referred to the next meeting of the Council for determination.

(Councillor E Henderson requested that his vote against the above resolution be recorded.)

**PR55/00 EQUALITIES PANEL**

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of the Equalities Panel held on 2 September 1999.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Minutes be received and adopted.
2. That the Terms of Reference for the Panel, be adopted.

(The Committee adjourned during consideration of the above Item, to hear the views of a member of the public.)

**PR56/00 MEMBERS' SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the Minutes of the Members' Services Sub-Committee held on 9 September 1999.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Minutes be received and adopted, subject to Councillor Edwards dissent from Minute MS4/99 being recorded.
2. That the revised Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee, be adopted.

**PR57/00 WAVENDON GATE COMBINED SCHOOL AND WALTON HIGH LANDSCAPE CONTRACTS**

Further to the meeting of the Committee held on 3 August 1999 (Minute PR33/00 refers), the Committee had been circulated with a report from Internal Audit on issues relating to the letting of a landscaping tender for Walton High and Wavendon Gate Combined School Playing Fields.

RESOLVED -

That the Internal Audit Service be requested to examine the letting of a random sample of contracts from across the Directorates, and report back to this Committee as soon as possible.

**PR58/00 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

RESOLVED -

That the public and press representatives be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 (Staff) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, in order that the Committee may consider the following matter:

Legal Services VCT Award of Contract

**PR59/00 LEGAL SERVICES VCT AWARD OF CONTRACT**

The Committee considered a report which invited it to award the contract for Legal Services, following a Voluntary Competitive Tendering exercise.

It was reported that three bids had been received; two from private practice solicitors and one from the in-house team in partnership with an established City firm.

The Committee was recommended to accept the in-house bid, which provided considerably better value for money than the external bids.

RESOLVED -

That the contract for Legal Services be awarded to the in-house team, MK Legal, for up to three years.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.50 PM