



Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held on WEDNESDAY 29 MARCH 2000 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor Long (Chair)
Councillors Bristow, Edwards, Fairweather, Gibbs (substitute for Councillor Turnbull), E Henderson, I Henderson, Hopkins, Lloyd, Pym (substitute for Councillor Mabbutt), Morsley (substitute for Councillor Miles), 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), P Timmins (Treasurer), M Jones (Head of Legal and Property Services), J Moffoot (Head of Corporate Administration), L McGillivray (Head of Policy and Communications), P Heaton (Marketing and Communications Manager), I Hart (Finance Manager (Resources)), G Snelson (Corporate Policy Manager) and I Reed (Senior Committee Manager)

Apologies: Councillors Mabbutt, Miles, Tapp and Turnbull

PR122/00 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 15 February 2000, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

PR123/00 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In accordance with Sections 94-98 of the Local Government Act 1972, the following Members declared interests:

Councillor Fairweather declared a pecuniary interest in relation to fire safety, following the fire at Mothercare World, Kingston.

Councillor Pym declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to matters regarding the provision of grant aid and relationships with the voluntary sector.

PR124/00 FIRE SAFETY - MOTHERCARE WORLD, KINGSTON

At the request of Councillor Pym, the Committee considered the issue of fire safety at the Mothercare World shop in Kingston, following the occasion of a serious fire in January 2000, when four retail units were completely demolished.

Councillor Pym requested that the Committee refer to the Fire Authority, the issue of the installation of sprinkler systems when shop units like this were constructed.

RESOLVED -

That the issues raised be referred to the Combined Fire Authority.

PR125/00 REWARDING EXCELLENCE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT 2000 AWARD

The Committee was advised that Milton Keynes Council had been judged the winning Council in the local government Innovation of the Year Award for the Budget Referendum for the year 1999/2000.

PR126/00 NEW POLITICAL MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Further to Minute PR109(a)/00 of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 February 2000, the Committee considered the following issues that required decisions.

(a) Procedural Standing Orders

The Committee was advised that the Democratic Structures Working Group had agreed that a representative from each of the political groups would need to consider the draft Procedural Standing Orders, when they were prepared.

Members of the Committee expressed their deep concern that, in order for the new Procedural Standing Orders to be used for the next Council year, it was important that the Standing Orders were adopted at the Annual Council meeting on 23 May 2000.

RESOLVED -

1. That the three political groups' representatives nominated to discuss the new Procedural Standing Orders, meet as soon as possible.
2. That the draft Standing Orders be submitted to an appropriate meeting, in order that they can be stood adjourned to the Annual Council Meeting on 23 May 2000.

(b) Standing Orders Relating to Contracts, Land and Buildings

In answer to a question from Councillor E Henderson, Councillor K Wilson gave the Committee an assurance that

any decision made by the Cabinet or a Cabinet Member (excluding those made under the urgency arrangements), would be eligible to be called-in under the procedures.

RESOLVED -

That paragraph C3(b) "Exemptions" of the Standing Orders, be amended to read as follows:

"Where there is a necessity for incurring expenditure or accepting tenders in contravention of these Standing Orders by the nature of the "urgency" of the situation, the appropriate Chief Officer and Chief Officer Finance and Corporate Services, in consultation with the relevant Executive Member with portfolio, shall have authority to authorise such action."

RECOMMENDED -

That the Standing Orders, as amended, be approved.

(c) Financial Regulations and Procedures

The Committee considered a report which recommended adoption of the revised Financial Regulations and supporting Financial Procedures.

RECOMMENDED -

That the revised Financial Regulations and supporting Financial Procedures be adopted, with effect from the end of the Annual Council Meeting to be held on 23 May 2000.

(d) Co-option of Representatives

The Committee considered a report which invited it to consider the representation and role for co-opted representatives under the new Democratic Structures, together with any interim arrangements which might be considered necessary.

The Committee was advised that the Democratic Structures Working Group had already considered the report and, subject to consultation with current co-optees, had supported the recommendations.

It was also noted that all current co-optees had had the opportunity to comment on the report.

RESOLVED -

1. That, with the exception of statutory co-optees, formally co-opted representatives to Committees and Sub-Committees be dispensed with in favour of inviting persons with relevant expertise to input into the scrutiny process and to be consulted, as appropriate, on decisions/recommendations to be made by an

Executive Member, with Standing Orders, Protocols, etc. being prepared as necessary to permit this.

2. That, where possible, with the exception of statutory co-optees, current co-optees be included on an appropriate Consultative Assembly.
3. That the statutory co-optees and voting parent governor representatives be retained (as legislation requires co-opted church representatives and elected parent governors with voting rights to participate in 'education' decisions) on the scrutiny body with responsibility for education issues.

(e) Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies

The Committee considered a report which identified the role of Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies in the new democratic arrangements.

The Committee noted that the issues had been discussed at a meeting of the Democratic Structures Working Group held on 2 March 2000 (Minute DS58/00 refers), and its comments were reported to the meeting.

RESOLVED -

That the Council continues its commitment to and its relationships with Partnerships and Consultative Assemblies; and where the Council has a right to nominate Members; resolves that:

- (i) the Cabinet shall nominate a lead Member from amongst the Cabinet, appropriate to the Cabinet portfolios, for each Partnership and Consultative Assembly, but this does not imply that the Cabinet Member need be a Member of the Partnerships or Consultative Assemblies;
- (ii) where there is more than one nominated Member on a Partnership, the Cabinet will nominate the other Members;
- (iii) in the case of locally based Partnerships, where there is more than one Member represented, priority should go to local Members;
- (iv) in the case of Consultative Assemblies, all Members should be asked to which Consultative Assemblies they wish to be regularly invited;
- (v) that, although all Members are able to attend a meeting of a Consultative Assembly as an observer, there will need to be Members who are the designated representative(s) of the Council;

- (vi) that Partnerships/Consultative Assemblies have a right of recommendation to an appropriate Council body;
 - (vii) that this Committee notes that in the context of Partnerships/ Consultative Assemblies, the workload for individual Cabinet Members appears to be high;
 - (viii) there is a need to identify the key Partnerships/ Consultative Assemblies;
 - (ix) that, where possible, a Scrutiny/Opposition Member be appointed to each of the bodies, in addition to the Cabinet Member(s) (which may require the Council making a request to the bodies concerned); and
 - (x) that each body be given clear Terms of Reference.
- (f) Provision of Grant Aid and Relationships with the Voluntary Sector

The Committee considered a report which identified a range of possible arrangements for Grant Aid decision-making, for consideration under the new Democratic Structures.

RESOLVED -

1. That decisions be taken by individual Cabinet Members (according to their portfolio responsibilities), based on officer recommendations in accordance with Council policies.
 2. That a form of consultation be built into the process of decision making.
 3. That the Voluntary Sector Consultative Assembly be consulted.
 4. That the Cabinet Member taking most of the grant aid funding decisions should not be eligible for appointment as the Chair (or joint Chair) of the Voluntary Sector Consultative Assembly, so creating a fair relationship between the Cabinet and the Voluntary Sector as a whole.
 5. That the views of voluntary sector organisations be sought on the proposed arrangements and that 'calling in' or the means of challenging decisions be fully described.
- (g) Principles of Communication and Consultation

The Committee agreed that, in order for the new political structures to be effective, its decision-making needed to be clear and understandable to the public.

The Committee noted that the officers in compiling a number of principles, had drawn upon the experience of the IDeA

simulation exercise relating to new political structures, the 20/20 Vision experience and Government guidance.

The Committee was advised that the Democratic Structures Working Group at its meeting held on 8 February 2000 (Minute DS48/00 refers), had supported the principles set out in the report's recommendations.

RESOLVED -

That the following principles be adopted and used when drawing up the detailed working arrangement for the new systems, and used also to evaluate the working arrangements periodically:

- (a) Transparent - it should be clear:
 - (i) who is deciding what, when and how; and
 - (ii) what opportunities there are for contributing to, influencing, questioning or overturning decisions.
- (b) Consultative - there should be opportunities for influence for external stakeholders to be built into the system.
- (c) Accessible - efforts should be made to ensure that all sections of the local community have the opportunity to influence decision making.
- (d) Open - there should be opportunities for public questions, scrutiny and influence over decision making.
- (e) Efficient - the systems should have regard to efficient use of Member, officer and stakeholder time and costs.
- (h) Terminology

At the request of the Democratic Structures Working Group, the Committee considered whether the executive body was to be formally titled the "Executive" or the "Cabinet".

The Committee was also invited to consider the name of the new scrutiny bodies.

RESOLVED -

1. That the executive body be known as the Cabinet.
 2. That the new scrutiny bodies be known as Boards.
- (i) Democratic Structures Process

The Committee was advised that although there were no further meetings of this Committee scheduled for the remainder of the Council year, there was still a number of

outstanding issues to be dealt with, relating to the introduction of new democratic structures.

RESOLVED -

1. That a Democratic Structures Sub-Committee be created to maintain the work programme for the introduction of new democratic structures, prior to the Annual Council Meeting on 23 May 2000.
2. That the Sub-Committee comprises eight Members as follows:

Councillors Day, Fairweather, I Henderson, Hopkins, Miles, Morsley, Tallack and K Wilson

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

PR127/00 SOCIAL SERVICES ISSUES

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

The Committee particularly discussed:

- (a) the work on "Better Care, Higher Standards";
- (b) feedback from the Social Services Inspectorate, following a visit to Milton Keynes on 1 March 2000; and
- (c) information on local Social Care Key Performance Indicators.

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.)

PR128/00 ETHICAL FRAMEWORK REVIEW

The Committee considered a report which was responding to a recent District Auditor's report, that recommended the Council should develop a policy on fraud and corruption, and reappraise its approach to training in, and communication of how to deal with, fraud and corruption.

The Committee noted that the report summarised the processes and procedures that were currently in place, and recommended ways of improving training and communication.

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

RESOLVED -

1. That the ethical framework be deferred for consideration during the next Council year.
2. That the officers be instructed to develop protocols for Members and officers within the new political structures, that emphasise the principles and practices set out in the report.

PR129/00 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 1999/2000 AND EFFECT ON LATER YEARS

The Committee considered a report on the latest outturn forecast against the budget for the current financial year, and the implications for later years' budgets.

RESOLVED -

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the officers be instructed to consider options for bridging any shortfall from projected capital receipts in the funding of capital and revenue budgets.

PR130/00 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF APPLICATIONS

- (a) Application for Discretionary Rate Relief under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988

The Committee was invited to consider an application for Discretionary Rates Relief under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, from the National Children's Home.

Further to the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 3 December 1997 (Minute R68/98 refers), the Committee was invited to consider delegating powers, authorising the Treasurer to grant Discretionary Rate Relief under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 in specific circumstances.

RESOLVED -

1. That 20% of Discretionary Rate Relief under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, be allowed in respect of the National Children's Home's occupation of 91/92 Weavers Hill, Fullers Slade, from 1 April 1997 to 31 March 1999.
2. That the Treasurer be authorised to allow Discretionary Rate Relief under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, when all of the following conditions have been satisfied:
 - (a) Discretionary Rate Relief has been allowed to the same organisation for the same property

under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988;

- (b) for the period in question, Discretionary Rate Relief cannot lawfully be allowed under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988;
- (c) there is a legitimate reason for the delay in applying for Discretionary Rate Relief; and
- (d) hardship would occur if Discretionary Rate Relief was not allowed under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for the period in question.

- (b) Application for Discretionary Rate Relief under Section 44A of the Local Government Finance Act 1988

The Committee was advised that Vision Express had asked the Council to allow it rate relief for the two months it was refurbishing the rear part of its City Centre shop.

The Committee was advised that an additional letter had been received from Vision Express supporting its application.

RESOLVED -

That the application from Vision Express for Discretionary Rate Relief be refused.

- (c) Application for Discretionary Rate Relief under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988

The Committee considered a report which set out the details of an application for 20% of Discretionary Rate Relief, made by the National Hockey Foundation, for the year 2000/01.

The Committee noted that 80% mandatory rate relief had been awarded to the National Hockey Foundation. However, the Foundation was requesting 20% discretionary rate relief for one year only, because of the staging of the Women's Hockey Olympic qualifier for eleven days in March 2000.

The officers advised the Committee at the meeting that the Learning and Development Directorate had already made a commitment to grant aid the National Hockey Association for the employment of a Hockey Development Officer, and that this sum of £15,000 could be used to offset some of the costs of granting rate relief, as it would generate additional funding.

RESOLVED -

That for the year 2000/01 only, and for exceptional reasons, the Committee agrees £20,000 Discretionary Rate Relief for the National Hockey Foundation, funded from £15,000 from the Learning and Development Directorate budget for a Hockey Development Officer.

PR131/00

COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICE PARTNERSHIP

The Committee considered a report which updated the Council on the development of the Community Legal Service in Milton Keynes, and reported on the next phase of the project.

The Committee was advised that Milton Keynes as an Associate Pioneer was one of only seven Council areas in the south east to be chosen to pilot preparations for the Community Legal Service.

It was further reported that all Community Legal Service Partnerships were expected to agree a Concordat statement, indicating all members of the Partnership agree to support and develop the initiative.

RESOLVED -

1. That this Committee agrees the signing of the "Statement of Commitment (Concordat)".
2. That the implementation of the Associate Pioneer and contents of the Action Plan and Planned Next Steps, be noted.

PR132/00

POLLING STATION - WARREN CHILDREN'S CENTRE, LAKES ESTATE

At the request of Councillor Edwards, the Committee considered the possible relocation of the Polling Station on the Lakes Estate, Bletchley, from the Community Centre, Fern Grove, to the Warren Children's Centre, Serpentine Court.

It was reported that further to discussions with the Election Agents, the parents of the 70 children who regularly used the Children's Centre were consulted on the proposal.

It was noted that all the letters and petitions received were opposed to the proposal, on the grounds that there would be major disruption to the arrangements of working parents and the staff at the Centre, and that there were other venues on the Lakes Estate that could be used without the same level of disruption.

RESOLVED -

1. That no further action be taken on the proposal to use the Warren Children's Centre as a Polling Station.
2. That the officers investigate the use of the Lakes Estate Housing Office as a Polling Station.

PR133/00

CHANGES TO HEAD OF SERVICE POST: EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS SERVICES

The Committee considered a report which proposed changes to the Head of Service post: Director of Education and Early Years Services.

The Committee was advised that it was necessary to undertake a review, following the appointment of Mr Andrew Flack, currently the Director of Education and Early Years Services, as Director of Education for Derby City Council.

The Committee was advised that the proposal to establish a revised Head of Service post was supported at a special meeting of the Community Learning Committee on 27 March 2000.

RESOLVED -

1. That the establishment of a revised Head of Service post, to be known as "Head of School Effectiveness and Early Years Services" be established, to manage the Advisory and School Support Services, Early Years and Childcare and Pupil Services (MK14, subject to evaluation), and approve the changes to the management of Education Planning, as set out in the report.
2. That this Committee wishes to record its recognition of the work of Mr Andrew Flack.

PR134/00

ENERGY MANAGEMENT - CORPORATE BUILDINGS

The Committee considered a report which sought its approval for energy conservation works in corporate buildings, and to invite tenders from specialist firms in order to complete the project by the end of the financial year 2000/01.

It was noted that the project sought to improve energy management and improve working conditions in corporate buildings, principally Saxon Court and the Civic Offices.

RESOLVED -

That the Energy Management Works be approved, and the officers be authorised to seek competitive tenders for the procurement of lighting and other energy improvements for corporate buildings in the financial year 2000/01, subject to capital receipts being available.

PR135/00

GRANT AID CONTINGENCY FUND

Further to the meeting of the Grant Aid Committee held on 8 March 2000 (Minute GA24/00 refers), the Committee was requested to set up a contingency fund of £25,000 for the use of voluntary organisations grant aided by the Council, which experience severe financial difficulties.

RESOLVED -

That a contingency fund of £25,000 be created as part of the budget review process in July 2000, for the use of voluntary organisations grant aided by the Council in the financial year 2000/01, which experience severe financial difficulties.

PR136/00 ASBESTOS - BUDGET ISSUES AND PROCEDURES

Further to the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 9 March 2000, the Committee was asked to consider the recommendation to establish a budget for the management of asbestos.

It was also noted that the Sub-Committee had considered a draft corporate action list for asbestos procedures.

RESOLVED -

1. That the establishment of a budget for the management of asbestos, be agreed.
2. That progress be reviewed in July 2000.
3. That the draft corporate action list be noted, and the officers be instructed to address the issue of asbestos in public areas as soon as possible.

PR137/00 SINGLE STATUS - PROGRESS REPORT

Further to the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 21 March 2000 (Minute P36/00 refers), the Committee was asked to consider the outcome of negotiations at the Joint Negotiating Committee on 10 March 2000.

RESOLVED -

That enhancements for those staff in libraries on grade MK7 and above working at weekends, be protected for a period of three years from 1 April 2000, with an additional increment being awarded on 1 April 2000 to all those affected.

PR138/00 PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 9 March 2000.

PR139/00 JOINT NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

The Committee was advised that a meeting of the Joint Negotiating Committee had been held that day, and the Minutes were circulated at the meeting.

The Joint Negotiating Committee had discussed:

- (a) Termination of Childcare Subsidy Scheme;
- (b) Salaries for Music Teachers; and
- (c) Salaries for Adult Continuing Education Tutors.

In regard to the salaries for music teachers and Adult Continuing Education tutors, it was noted that the proposed salary recommendations had been referred to the Joint Advisory

Committee and, subject to acceptance by the Joint Advisory Committee, were to be agreed by the Joint Negotiating Committee.

In regard to the proposed termination of the Childcare Subsidy Scheme, the Joint Negotiating Committee had recommended to this Committee that the Childcare Subsidy Scheme be retained, and that the £25,000 extracted from the budget for the current financial year be replaced in the financial year 2000/01. It was noted that £10,000 was already in the budget, therefore, the additional amount required was £145,000. It was noted that, in future years, the budget would be £130,000, as set out in the Single Status agreement.

The Committee considered a report which set out the financial implications to the Council of the proposal relating to the Childcare Subsidy Scheme from 1 April 2000.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Childcare Subsidy Scheme, which is a legal requirement in that it is contained in the Council' s Single Status Agreement, be retained.
2. That the £25,000 extracted from this budget in this current financial year, be paid back in the financial year 2000/01.
3. That £145,000 be reinstated in the Childcare Subsidy Scheme for the 2000/2001 budget only.

PR140/00 TACKLING SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN MILTON KEYNES

At the request of Councillor E Henderson, the Chief Executive reported to the Committee on the Social Inclusion Project which had recently been initiated within the Council.

PR141/00 PENNY COVENEY - STRATEGIC DIRECTOR RESOURCES

The Chair informed the meeting that Penny Coveney, Strategic Director Resources, was retiring from the Council on 8 May 2000.

RESOLVED -

That this Committee thanks Penny Coveney for her work and support to the Council over many years.

PR142/00 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED -

That the public and press representatives be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 7 (Financial Business Affairs of Any Particular Person) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, in order that the Committee may consider the following matter:

Proposal for a Stadium on the Denbigh North Site

PROPOSAL FOR A STADIUM ON THE DENBIGH NORTH SITE

The Committee considered a report which outlined a proposal put forward by Inter MK Limited, for a stadium development on the Denbigh North Site.

It was further reported that the company was seeking a “lock-out” agreement from the Council for a minimum period of twelve months, to enable it to progress proposals for a stadium development on the site.

RESOLVED -

1. That the Committee agrees that Inter MK Limited be granted a ‘lock-out’ agreement on the Denbigh North site for an initial period of twelve months, subject to milestones and terms to be agreed by the Head of Legal and Property Services.
2. That the BS Group plc be made aware of Inter MK Limited’s proposals and be invited to work with Inter MK Limited to prepare proposals for a complementary development on the Bowl and Elfield Park sites.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.35 PM