

**To: All Members of the County Council  
All Chief Officers**

**From: COUNTY SECRETARY'S  
DEPARTMENT**

**Ask for: Sally-Ann Cole**

**Ext: 25228**

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**RESOURCES, PROSPERITY, PARTNERSHIP AND CONSULTATION SELECT  
COMMITTEE  
THURSDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2001 AT 10.30 AM**

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

D Clayton, F W Clayton, R S Clements, G M Cook I H Laidlaw-Dickson (Vice Chairman),  
F J Escott, P V Goggins, A M R Searing (Chairman), W A Storey, S Quilty

**EXECUTIVE MEMBERS**

D A Ashley (Community Information & Development) D Beatty (Resources),  
D B Lloyd (Best Value)

**Other Members in Attendance**

R J M Ellis, G D Game, T G M Kent, M Green, R Mayes, R H Smith.

Upon consideration of the agenda for the Resources, Prosperity, Partnership and  
Consultation Select Committee meeting on 5 July 2001 as circulated, copy annexed,  
action was taken or decisions were reached on individual items as recorded below.

**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Membership Changes

**FW Clayton** had replaced **R S Smith**  
**R S Clements** had replaced **H M Saunders**

**PUBLIC PETITIONS**

None

**QUESTIONS**

(i) R Mills asked the Executive Member (Resources) the following questions:

I note from the update on the 2002/03 budget, which was reported to the Executive  
Committee on 15 October 2001 that efficiency savings of £6.5 million had been

identified over the summer period.

In relation to the Adult Care Service, these efficiency savings include £345,000 cashable savings and £1,842,000 of non-cashable savings, a total figure of £2,187 million which represents approximately one third of the “significant efficiency savings” referred to above.

Would Councillor Beatty advise me whether the Adult Care Service was given a target in terms of efficiency savings?

D Beatty responded:

**There are four questions, all of which are more relevantly asked of the Executive Member, Adult Care Services and at the appropriate Adult Care Select Committee.**

**However, the answers to the questions in so far as they impact on the Resources Select Committee are as follows:**

**All departments were asked, as usual, to try to identify efficiency savings, cashable and non cashable of 2%. Adult Care volunteered 1.9% arising from a combination of 2001/2 full effect and new savings 2002/3. The average of all departments’ achievements is around 1.5%. Questions (and supplementaries) relating to specific efficiency proposals should be raised at the relevant Select Committee.**

(ii) Would Councillor Beatty agree that the proposal to increase Gypsy rents by 6% above the rate of inflation to achieve a “saving” of £33,000 is discriminatory?

**Policy regarding Gypsy Services is that the Service will operate on a break-even basis. The increase in rents proposed for 2002/3 recovers costs and enables the Service to break even. Is this discriminatory? I do not believe so. Especially as 95% of tenants have their costs paid by Housing Benefit.**

(iii) Does Councillor Beatty consider that the savings initiatives directed at staff, including for example more training to enable them to manage a larger caseload [producing “savings” of £112,000]; are likely to adversely affect the County’s current difficulties with recruitment and retention?

**No. You will need to refer this question to the Executive Member, Adult Care Services for more detailed reply at the appropriate Select Committee.**

(iv) Does Councillor Beatty consider that placing 10 adults with high dependency needs in establishments staffed for people with medium dependency needs [producing savings of £50,000] is an efficiency saving or a reduction in service?

**It is an efficiency saving, not a reduction in service. You will need to refer this question to the Executive member, Adult Care Services for a more detailed reply at the appropriate Select Committee.**

**PART I ('OPEN') BUSINESS****1. BEST VALUE AUDIT REPORT BVPP 2001/02**

[Officer contact: Anne Fisher 01992 588690]

**1.1 Cabinet Proposal**

“that the Best Value Audit Report BVPP 2001/2002 go to the Resources Prosperity Partnership and Consultation Select Committee for full consideration.”

1.2 Anne Fisher introduced the report.

1.3 Comments and questions raised during the debate included:

- 1.4
- Recommendation 4 in the Best Value Audit Report 2001/02 Appendix A stated that “the review programme does not address the weakest services” Did the Audit Commission and/or the Cabinet identify what are the weakest services?

Clare Kaye explained that they had queried this with the Audit Commission, but had Audit Commission has not specified any particular service. Performance indicators can be looked at, but we are looking at this issue from a customer based perspective and the way services are received rather than organised. Then looking at perceived weakness.

- 1.5
- Given the comments made by the District Audit have the tasks in the programme been reviewed and adjusted?

Bernard Lloyd confirmed that the programme is being reviewed and the Audit Commission's comments are being taken into account. This included the tasks in individual reviews. He reminded the Select Committee that the whole of the County Council's services have to be reviewed within five years

- 1.6
- What are the criteria used to reorder the tasks and will they be published?

Clare Kaye explained the criteria which are:

- Better reflect organisational priorities for service improvement (as per the District Audit comments),
- Get the most out of our investment in Best Value reviews to achieve management objectives,
- Better link with preparations for PSA and with Member Promises,
- Produce fewer, larger and more thematic customer facing reviews.

A revised list of the review programme will form part of the process of the scrutiny of the BVPP.

- 1.7 Bill Ogle informed the meeting that they had discussed the issue of the 'weakest services' at length with the District Audit and shared with them our criteria and performance indicators. We have asked for evidence of their findings and which they think are weak performance services compared to the targets. We have tried to act positively and have looked to identify importance and impact of each service to the public and the Council and to improve any areas where necessary.

- 1.8
- It was noted that in Recommendation 3 that joint working has been identified. It does not reflect recognition that in some areas joint working is not appropriate.

Robert Ellis explained that the County Council's job is to give best service the public if working in co-operation with the district gives better service then that is what we should do.

- 1.9 Response to Cabinet

There were no comments to Cabinet

## 2 **BEST VALUE REVIEW OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR FUNDING PROCESS**

[Officer contact: Keith Shepherd 01992 555368]

- 2.1 Executive Committee Comment

*"It was noted that the outcome of the Review would be discussed at the Resources, Prosperity, Partnership and Consultation Select Committee; and Adult Care Services Select Committee in the autumn. The Chairman undertook that any comments made by those Select Committees would be reported to Cabinet for consideration"*

- 2.2 Anne Fisher introduced the report. David Beatty introduced the Executive Committee comments and added that this was proviso subject to the financial requirements being found during the course of the budget process currently underway.

Comments and questions raised during the debate included:

- 2.3
- Concern was raised that efficiency saving include vulnerable groups such as gypsies.
- 2.4
- Concern was expressed that the funding for the Voluntary Sector should be consistent with the County Council objectives, but some groups would stop getting funding and have to stop doing some of their work if their aims and objectives did not comply. How do we make a judgement on what is worth while and what is not?

D Roberts

David Beatty explained that they are not intending to make availability of external funding a condition to support the Voluntary Sector. A lot of the organisations are integral part of service for Hertfordshire and it is not the intention to withdraw funding, but to make the system clearer.

- 2.5 • When it comes to implementation bigger organisations like MIND and MENCAP already have the support, but we need to ensure that we are aware of the different needs of small organisation.
- 2.6 Derrick Ashley informed the meeting that he chaired the review and that the work is in progress. The Review had three main objectives:
- To find ways to increase funding.
  - Develop a more focused approach
  - Ensure that small voluntary groups lives are made easy as possible in order to get resources and carry out tasks.

The Select Committee supported these objectives.

#### 2.7 Response to Cabinet

That the above comments be submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

D Roberts

### 3 SCRUTINY OF THE BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN (BVPP) 2002-03

[Officer contact: Anne Fisher 01992 588690]

- 3.1 Ian Laidlaw-Dickson explained why he had requested this item on the agenda to establish a timetable and programme for the scrutiny of the BVPP to show that the Select Committee is attempting to monitor the work of the County Council.
- 3.2 Anne Fisher introduced this report and explained the proposals.
- 3.3 It was agreed that:
- The RPP&C Select Committee will undertake regular scrutiny at its meetings
- 3.4 Each Promise will be scrutinised through a report on the current state of achievement of the Promise Action Plan as set out in the BVPP and supported by traffic-lighted Performance Indicator information.
- 3.5 To recommend to the Council's other Select Committees that they review their scrutiny programme in the light of this proposed approach of the RPP&C Select Committee, to achieve consistent scrutiny of the Promises and the performance information that fall within their remit.

A Fisher

A Fisher  
J Harries  
N Patient  
P Hull

### 4 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT (PACMAN)

[Officer contact Steve Gilbey 01707 281700]

- 4.1 Steve Gilbey Head of Contract and Supplies introduced the report and explained that the Council had received two stars for the review, which is good service which will definitely improve.

Comments and questions raised during the debate included:

- 4.2
- Is the replacement for the current financial system in Recommendation 1 the same system that was in last year's budget and if so how is this progressing?

David Beatty confirmed that it is the same system as featured in last year's budget, and is the replacement for the current Walker system, and which was given full support as a priority when setting the budget. Work started on the new system in April but this has been delayed due to specification details to define what we want from the system. We have managed to extend the repair and maintenance service agreement for the present system while we continue to work on its replacement.

- 4.3
- How much has been spent on it?

Chris Sweeney confirmed that £1.8 million was spent last year, £1.6 this year and predicted £200,000 next year

- 4.4
- Do you have the costings?

Chris Sweeney explained that the fully implemented system effectively does not have to be paid for in the capital cost, but that the implementation costs have not yet been signed off. He offered to circulate a note of the full costings.

- 4.5
- Are the savings identified in the report going to be made?

David Beatty confirmed that that savings are expected to be made and are spread across all the departments in the efficiency savings.

- 4.6
- How are the County Supplies on-line catalogue and the weblinks progressing?

Steve Gilbey confirmed that the electronic catalogue is completed and on the Website. It is being piloted in some corporate departments and a group of schools in Tring. It is a big cultural change and it is expected that developments will take place over the next five years. There is still a lot of work to be done to show people the benefits.

- 4.7
- Further clarification on recommendation 4 and joint procurement.

Steve Gilbey informed the meeting that the Consortium has expanded in its 10 years of existence and has grown from five organisations to its current membership of 17. There are some problems with regard to geography, but

C Sweeney

there are plans to review the membership and work with other consortiums to make us more effective and efficient in our joint procurement.

## **5 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF POST ROOMS**

[Officer contact: Ros Aird 01707 281710]

5.1 Ros Aird introduced the report.

5.2 The report was noted.

## **6 RECRUITMENT & RETENTION UPDATE**

[Officer contact: Carole Grimwood 01992 556667]

6.1 Carole Grimwood introduced the report explained that it had been reissued due to some errors in the original figures about staff turnover.

6.2 Comments and queries raised during the debate included:

6.3 

- Further information was requested on the staff development policy.

Carole Grimwood confirmed that all departments have a Performance and Development scheme based on two way annual interviews to discuss all aspects of their work and their training and development needs. New staff have a 6 month probationary period and an appraisal at the end of that period.

6.4 

- Concern was expressed by members that all staff needs are met, from small easily solved issues like, for example, a new kettle to the training needs.

Carole Grimwood conformed that staff development scheme is a two way process with individuals completing self assessments about all areas of their job and having the opportunity to comment on their position. In return they receive feedback from their line manager. Staff do not have to wait for an appraisal to raise any issues that need addressing throughout the year.

It was suggested that the Panel could look at performance management and development

6.5 

- Will there be a duplication of work with the Best Value Review (BVR) of People and Employment and the Member panel being established to look at recruitment and retention?

Alan Warner informed the meeting that he hoped that duplication would be avoided. The BVR will look at the process related to recruitment and

retention and the member panel will be looking at initiatives to improve recruitment and retention.

- 6.6
- Bob Mayes informed the meeting that he had received a letter from a Hertfordshire MP saying that three other targeted bids for the Government's Key Workers Starter Homes scheme had been more successful as they were more targeted bids. This conflicts with the information that the County Council has received from another MP about the reason that the County Council was not successful with its bid.

It was requested that the information in the letter be shared.

Alan Warner confirmed that there is a meeting organised by Kerry Pollard MP tomorrow at the House of Commons, which also involves the Housing Associations and District Councils, to discuss this further and this will be followed by a wider meeting on Tuesday with other relevant public sector organisations. Group Leaders and Personnel Spokesmen have been invited.

- 6.7
- It was suggested that instead of relying on the Government to assist with keyworker housing that the County Council should be more proactive. Perhaps the Cabinet could commission a study to look at the feasibility of an equity sharing scheme with our own assets as a positive and controlled way forward.

Bill Ogley confirmed that there is already some work being done around the provision of additional equity with the Housing Associations and the matter can be brought forward.

It was agreed to submit the comments to the Cabinet for consideration.

- 6.8
- The results of the staff survey (2.4 page 4) show that 22% of staff leave due to "The Work". what does this mean?

Carole Grimwood explained that there are about 30 different categories that staff can tick as reason for leaving. "The Work" covers a range of issues, too much work, too little, not what was expected. At the top of the list is Career Development and this is being addressed with the review of pay and reward. In Adult Care Services whilst staff are taking professional qualifications as part of their career development retention is 100%.

- 6.9
- Do these figures cover all staff?

Carol Grimwood confirmed that all departments should now be carrying out exit surveys to gather the information, although the data presented in the report is not complete. These figures are for all departments except schools and Shire Catering, from whom it is impractical to get the information due to the nature of the service and high turnover of staff. They are, however, hoping to take a different approach using focus groups with staff to find out reason why they stay, what is good/bad etc.

D Roberts

- 6.10 • Have we looked at where we are advertising for positions, as we seem to be having little response to advertisements for vacancies.

Carole Grimwood explained that the type of job advertisements and where we place them is reviewed on a regular basis. Recruiting for social workers and teachers is a national problem.

- 6.11 • Do we have comparable data with other Authorities around advertising?

Carole Grimwood explained that other Authorities are not generally able to provide the comparative data. They do keep up to date and check with the recruitment industry continually and could produce some comparable information around the costing. As the Recruitment Centre is implemented which takes a different approach it will be increasingly difficult to make comparisons.

C Grimwood

- 6.12 • Members felt that the retention of existing workers was paramount especially since the cost of recruitment is so expensive.

Alan Warner also explained that they are initiating an affinity benefits package including childcare vouchers, discounted prices on computer purchase etc. They are listening to staff to see what is important to them.

- 6.13 • Members asked that the benefits be introduced as soon as possible.

Alan Warner confirmed that they are in the process of completing the necessary contracts and that the scheme is a priority.

- 6.14 • What is the definition of a long term contract?

Carole Grimwood confirmed that it is generally a contract longer than three months, but for the Best Value Performance Indicators it is 12 months. Many short term contracts are maternity leave or project work.

- 6.15 It was agreed to set up a panel with a membership of eight (5:3) to look at Recruitment and Retention on behalf of the RPP&C, Adult Care Services and Children, Schools and Families Select Committees. This will sit outside the Best Value Process.

A Warner  
C Grimwood

- 6.16 The names of members to be appointed by the County Secretary following Notification by Group Spokesmen.

S A Cole  
J Harries  
P Hull

## 7 ESTABLISHMENT OF ASSET PLANNING SELECT COMMITTEE PANEL

[Officer contact: Tony Comer 01992 556215]

- 7.1 It was agreed to establish a Asset Planning Select Committee Panel with a membership of 12 (7:5) with two members appointed from each from the other Select Committees (Adult Care, CSF, CIP and Environment) and

T Comer

four members, to include the Chairman and the Vice Chairman, from the RPP&C Select Committee.

- 7.2 The names of members to be appointed by the County Secretary following notification by the Select Committees' Group Spokesmen.

S A Cole  
J Harries  
P Hull  
N Patient

## 8 CRIME REDUCTION PANEL

[Officer contact: Philip Winter 01992588719]

- 8.1 Philip Winter introduced this report.
- 8.2 Members expressed disappointment that the Panel meeting scheduled for this afternoon had been cancelled.
- 8.3
- It was queried whether the timescales for the Crime Reduction Unit Workplan (Appendix b) had been met.

Philip Winter explained that most of the timescales for those projects schedules for implementation in October had been met.

## 9. ITEMS REFERRED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL

- 9.1 The BEST VALUE AUDIT REPORT BVPP 2001/02 was referred to the next County Council meeting

R Coxall  
A Fisher  
S A Cole

**Andrew Laycock**  
County Secretary

