

OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

21st January 2002

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Bell (Chair) and Councillors Harrington and Routledge.

Conservative Group

Councillors Bladen and Mrs. Robbins.

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Richards (Labour Group).

OV/17. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 19th November 2001 and the Meeting held on 10th December 2001 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

OV/18. **REPORT OF MEMBER**

The Chair advised Members that he had attended the Meeting of the Finance and Management Committee on 17th January 2002. At that Meeting, it had been agreed that a contribution of £1million be made to the Pension Fund and the Chair expressed concern at the figures in the report together with the relatively short period of time Members were given to consider this matter. Accordingly, he considered that the decision merited call-in for the purposes of clarification and requested the support of other Members in this regard.

Arising from this matter, Members considered that the attendance of Overview and Scrutiny Members at meetings of the policy committees was important in order that the deliberations leading to decisions may be heard.

OV/19. **EXIT STRATEGY – SWADLINCOTE WOODLAND FOREST PARK**

It was reported that this matter had been referred to this Committee by the Community Services Committee at its Meeting held on 10th January 2002. The Chair advised Members that he had recently visited the site and was impressed by the excellent development. Mr. C. Mason, Facilities and Development Manager and Mr. M. Roseburgh, Community Regeneration Officer attended the Meeting and outlined the background to the scheme. It was advised that the SRB funding had now been completed, with in excess of £500,000 of SRB funds directed into the project. The management arrangements were also outlined and the SRB Regeneration Board would continue for approximately one further year and, in the meantime, the future Local Strategic Partnership arrangements would be discussed.

Mr. Mason and Mr. Roseburgh outlined the contents of the previous report to the Community Services Committee and Members took the opportunity to ask any questions on the matter.

By way of background to the project, the Committee noted that work on the Enterprise Trail was currently in abeyance, following the resignation of the Arts Development Officer who managed the project. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the Council was investigating the possibility of providing enhanced funding to partner organisations to enable them to take on this type of project.

With regard to resources to implement the Management Plan, the Leisure Facilities Manager confirmed that all of the costs listed at Annexe 'A' to the original report had been included in the budget. Revenue costs were being met from monies arising from the Section 106 agreement covering the development of the site. These resources were expected to last for approximately 6 years.

With regard to the proposed provision of a cycleway through the site, Mr. Mason advised that an application had been submitted for funding and it was noted that this aspect was a key link in the Cycle Strategy. Applications had also been submitted for funding towards the majority of the access improvement works. It was acknowledged that at the present time, the level of signage relating to the site was limited, which would need to be addressed accordingly.

With regard to the proposed gateway bridge, such a provision may provide a link to common land and the Maurice Lea Memorial Park together with other areas of the National Forest. However, there had been limited consultation on this provision at the present time. It was noted that a lack of staff resources in recent months had prevented various aspects of the matter from being progressed but one member of staff had recently returned from long-term sickness absence, which should hopefully ease the situation.

With regard to the long-term management of the site, it was considered that opportunities to generate income were relatively limited in comparison to the Rosliston Forestry Centre. It was noted that four organisations had previously expressed an interest in the management and development of the site following an advertisement placed. However, other priorities and long-term sickness absence to key personnel had delayed this matter but this would now be pursued and it may be necessary to re-advertise.

The Chair acknowledged that staffing issues were a major factor on various aspects of this matter. Following consideration by the Committee, he would now prepare a report for Members' comments prior to any recommendations being formulated to the Community Services Committee.

OV/20. **REPORTS OF COMMUNITY AND CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The Committee received a verbal report on the discussion held at the recent Meeting of the Community Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the Meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee was now to be held on 28th January 2002 to accommodate a report on the budget process.

The Community Scrutiny Committee had received presentations on the Council's website, the Local Plan and the implementation of the action plan in connection with the best value reviews of the Sheltered Housing Service and Cleansing the Environment. It was noted that prior to the next Meeting of the Committee, a visit would be made to the Depot and reports would also be considered on the Strategic Housing Best Value Review, the Housing Investment Programme and the Consultation Strategy. Special projects requested by Members for consideration also included housing management issues and abandoned vehicles. In this regard, the Chair noted the Committee's heavy workload and emphasised that there should always be appropriate reasons for the consideration of special projects, involving subsequent recommendations to the appropriate policy committee. Accordingly, it was suggested that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community Scrutiny Committee should discuss the workload together with the scope of the special projects with the Policy and Best Value Manager prior to any consideration.

OV/21. **WORK PROGRAMMES**

The Committee noted the work programmes in respect of both Scrutiny Committees and this Committee, copies of which are attached at Annexe 'A' to these Minutes.

R.L. BELL

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 5.55 p.m.