

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

11th October 2001

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Wilkins (Chair), Councillor Pabla (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Brooks, Carroll, Evens, Lauro, Sherratt and Whyman.

Conservative Group

Councillors Harrison, Hood (substitute for Councillor Lemmon), Shaw and Mrs. Wheeler.

In Attendance

Councillors Harrington and Southerd (Labour Group) and Mrs. Robbins (Conservative Group).

Councillor Southerd, with the permission of the Chair spoke to Minute No. FM/43.

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Lemmon (Conservative Group).

FM/40. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 30th August 2001 were taken as read, approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

FM/41. **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORT**

The Chair reported that he was involved in a 'One World' charity event and that any tombola donations for this event would be welcomed.

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

FM/42. **SINGLE STATUS JOB EVALUATION**

Members had previously approved the implementation of Single Status Job Evaluation for the Authority using the NJC computerised scheme. A Steering Group had been established and had identified the scope of employees to be covered by the scheme. The project required joint working between Members, the Management Team and employee representatives. The Steering Group had met on a number of occasions and had made some progress which was outlined. Members were asked to consider the Terms of Reference for the Group, status and reporting lines and delegated powers required for the Group to operate efficiently.

It was suggested that the following Terms of Reference be approved for the Group:-

"The Single Status Steering Group will bring together Members, management and employees with the object of managing the

implementation of Single Status Job Evaluation in South Derbyshire District Council. This group will also review the overall remuneration packages and associated policies for employees who are directly affected. The group will manage the project within the financial resources of the Authority and ensure openness and transparency at all stages in the project.”

The Group had identified themselves as a ‘Task and Finish’ Working Group. It recommended the most appropriate reporting line would be to the Finance and Management Committee for items requiring Committee approval and for reporting progress on the project. It wished to be able to determine the frequency of reporting to committee as it considered relevant.

In order to enable Members of the Committee to be informed fully the Group recommended that a Union representative be allowed to attend Committees for all reports presented from the Steering Group. They would attend and speak to those agenda items only. Reports from the Group would be presented by the Personnel and Development Manager with the support of the Members on the Group, the Chief Finance Officer and the Union representative attending as appropriate. The Group proposed that for information purposes only it would report progress to the Joint Consultative Committee at various stages of the project. However, they recognised that there might be occasions where they would need to consult wider on particular issues. It was proposed that the notes of the Group would be for reference purposes only and would not be forwarded to Committee for approval. Therefore, a representative of Personnel and Development would record the notes and a Members’ Services Officer would not be required to attend meetings of the Group.

The Group had identified the key tasks of the project and these were circulated to Members for information. It was recommended that the delegated powers circulated be approved to enable the Working Group to manage effectively the implementation of the project.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That a Union representative be allowed to attend Meetings of the Finance and Management Committee when reports are presented from the Single Status Steering Group and be allowed to speak on such items.***
- (2) That the progress made to date by the Single Status Steering Group be noted.***
- (3) That the Terms of Reference outlined above be approved.***
- (4) That the status and reporting lines of the Group as outlined above be approved.***
- (5) That the delegated powers, as attached at Annexe ‘A’ be approved.***

FM/43. **DERBY AND SANDIACRE CANAL RESTORATION PROPOSAL**

Under Minute No. US/13 of the Urgency Sub-Committee Meeting held on 19th June 2000, this matter was considered previously. The Canal Trust requested assistance from this Authority, Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council and Erewash Borough Council towards the cost of employing a Project Officer for the year 2000/01 to be responsible for the administration of the Canal Restoration Scheme.

Erewash Borough Council was requested to provide office accommodation, telephones and some consumables for use by the Project Officer, whilst the other authorities were to share the cost of the salary by each contributing £5,500. Members agreed to make a contribution of £1,000 at that time from the Community Partnerships Fund and to review the matter in 2001/02 in the context of the Council's financial situation. A further contribution of £4,500 was made towards the end of the financial year (taken from the economic development budget) although no specific allocation had been made for this. Derby City Council and Derbyshire County Council also provided funding in the amount requested.

The four local authorities were now being requested to support the Project Officer post for the current financial year. Erewash Borough Council had continued to provide an office and related facilities, Derbyshire County Council had contributed £4,625 and Derby City Council had made budgetary provision for a contribution of £4,000. At the request of the local authorities, the Canal Trust had presented a business plan earlier in the year intended to demonstrate the practical feasibility of the scheme. The Chief Executive of Derby City Council however had expressed serious concern that the question of capital funding for the project, now costed at approximately £40 million had not been addressed properly. In response, the Canal Trust had commissioned the preparation of a Funding Report by the Waterways Trust although this had not yet been made available to the local authorities.

Councillor Brooks reported that all four Councils should be involved in future decisions of the project and that the problems experienced in the production of the business plan were being addressed by the Waterways Trust. British Waterways were fully behind the canal project and a Funding Officer had been appointed. The delay in the production of the business plan was that it was difficult to find a starting point. Councillor Brooks advised that the Derbyshire County Council Structure Plan contained a desire for some use of water in the County and this Council's Local Plan also referred to the canal being in need of improvement and restoration. Councillor Brooks advised that if this canal was completed then a loop was established which would be excellent for the District's tourism. He stated that this project was deserving of extra cash and suggested that a request in this regard be made to the Development Services Committee.

Councillor Whyman emphasised that he recognised the benefits of this project for South Derbyshire but had reservations that South Derbyshire had one kilometre of canal within 23 kilometres and the contribution requested seemed disproportionate. He was also concerned that this was an 'open-ended' commitment and that no budgetary provision had been made for this purpose.

Councillor Southerd expressed support for the scheme but also indicated concern at the budgetary implications. He stated that if the request was referred to the Development Services Committee then it would need to be made clear which budget the provision would come from. He also requested that if this was going to be an ongoing commitment it needed to be planned into the Council's budget process.

Councillor Lauro indicated that this project should be seen as a high priority and should be incorporated into the Council's tourism budget. He suggested that a presentation be made to a future Meeting on the progress of the project by the Waterways Trust.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the request for further funding of the Derby and Sandiacre Canal Project Officer post be referred to the Development Services Committee.***
- (2) That the funding ratio of support provided by Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council, Erewash Borough Council and this Council be examined.***
- (3) That a report/presentation on the progress of the Scheme be received at a future meeting.***

FM/44. **RURAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP**

Members were advised that it had been proposed by the Countryside Agency that a Rural Transport Partnership (RTP) covering South Derbyshire and Erewash Borough be established. The RTP Scheme was operated and funded by the Countryside Agency and provided grants for rural transport services and facilities. Support could be provided for all types of transport projects including those involving cars, buses, rail, cycling and walking. Projects that reduced the need to travel, such as mobile services could also be supported.

The initiative promoted the formation of partnerships comprising local authorities, voluntary and private sector groups, rural community councils and others where partners could take a joint view of the transport needs of local communities and develop projects to meet those needs. Groups could also apply for funding without being part of a local RTP although any such projects would be evaluated by the RTP to ensure consistency with its action plan.

A Partnership Officer was appointed by the RTP to liaise with local communities and service providers in the preparation of an Action Plan, evaluating the present situation and setting out proposals for improvements. The Plan provided a basis for developing projects and applying to the Countryside Agency and other organisations for funding.

Members were advised that Countryside Agency funding comprised the following:-

- (i) support for the funding of the Partnership Officer, representing up to 75% of the total cost.

- (ii) up to £250,000 towards the cost of projects developed by the RTP or other organisations, representing up to 75% of the cost of each project.
- (iii) a delegated fund of up to a further £10,000 each year for small scale transport projects, providing funding for up to 75% of the cost of each project, or 100% for projects costing less than £1,000 in total.

It was anticipated that other partners and agencies in the local scheme would include Derbyshire County Council, Erewash Borough Council, the National Forest, Derbyshire Rural Community Council, the Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfields Priority Area Partnership and the Southern Derbyshire Health Authority. All existing rural transport schemes, including community transport and public transport plus quality partnership initiatives would be considered as part of the overall strategy to be set out in the Action Plan. It had been proposed that a Partnership Officer be appointed by the local RTP before the end of the current calendar year to produce an action plan by Summer 2002. The RTP would run until 31st March 2004 at which time the national scheme was to be discontinued.

It was reported that the cost of employing a Partnership Officer would be approximately £38,000 per annum, including oncosts of which 25% of the total (or approximately £9,500) would need to be identified by the RTP. Funding contributions were being sought from all the potential partner organisations outlined above.

The Countryside Agency had indicated that contributions in kind could be considered as part of the match funding package. Office space could be provided by the Community and Leisure Development Division, any costs associated with the use of telephones or other equipment would be met by the RTP. The Countryside Agency had indicated that the cost of office rental could be considered as representing a contribution of £1,500 maximum. In addition, a financial contribution in the sum of £500 for the first year of operation was to be sought from the Crime and Disorder Partnership support budget.

RESOLVED:-

That support for the initiative be expressed and office space be provided at the Civic Offices for use by the Partnership Officer to the 31st March 2004.

FM/45. **DRAFT CORPORATE PLAN 2001**

Members were advised that the Corporate Plan was an important building block in the steps that were being taken to manage the organisation more effectively and to safeguard its long-term financial security. A first draft of the Plan was circulated for Members' information and comments. It was noted that the purpose of the Plan was to:-

- to set out a vision for South Derbyshire
- explain how the organisation would be managed over the next 18 months, the strategy that will be followed, and the implications for services in terms of priorities and methods of provision
- provide a framework for the Council's contributions to partnerships and joint working initiatives

- inform and involve internal and external stakeholders in the work of the Council

The Plan was focused on the next eighteen months. This was because local priorities were likely to change over this period with the development of the South Derbyshire Community Strategy. Under the Council's new constitution, the Corporate Plan formed part of the Authority's policy framework and must be approved by the Council.

Members debated the Corporate Plan at length and the Chief Executive advised that all Members of the Joint Negotiating Group were supportive of this document. He also emphasised the importance of this document to the future of the Organisation.

RESOLVED:-

That the draft Corporate Plan be recommended to the Council Meeting to be held on 1st November 2001 for implementation.

FM/46. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMENDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT [ACCESS TO INFORMATION] ACT 1985)**

RESOLVED:-

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that there would be disclosed exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Act indicated in brackets after each item.

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND REPORTS

Councillor Whyman gave a verbal report and asked questions relating to the Council's workforce.

FINANCIAL REGULATIONS 18(B) AND 18(C) – WRITE-OFFS (Paragraph 7)

The Committee agreed to write-off the sums outlined in the report under the provisions of Financial Regulations 18(b) and 18(c).

GRIEVANCE (Paragraph 1)

Members gave detailed consideration to a report concerning a grievance and made a resolution on its recommendations.

STAFFING – MEMBERS' SERVICES SECTION (Paragraph 1)

The Committee agreed various proposals for the staffing of the Members' Services Section within the Chief Executives Department.

SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW (Paragraphs 8 and 11)

The Committee approved a number of actions regarding the staffing implications arising from the review of the Sheltered Housing Service.

P.J. WILKINS

CHAIR