



Leicester  
City Council

## MINUTE EXTRACT

### ADULT & COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: WEDNESDAY, 21 JUNE 2006 at 5.30pm

#### P R E S E N T :

Councillor Almey – In the Chair  
Councillor A. Vincent – Focus Team Spokesperson

Councillor Garrity  
Councillor Waddington  
Councillor Thompson

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were requested to declare any interests they might have in the business to be discussed and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

No declarations were made at this time.

#### **9. THE COUNCIL'S OPERATIONAL TRANSPORT SERVICE**

The Chief Executive submitted a report on behalf of the Operational Transport Working Party that presented the conclusions and the recommendations following the investigation carried out by the Operational Transport Working Party, on behalf of Resources and Equal Opportunities, Education and Lifelong Learning and Social Services Scrutiny Committees. The investigation looked into the current and proposed future arrangements associated with Transport Services provided by the Regeneration and Culture Department for children and service users of the Education and Lifelong Learning and Social Care and Health departments.

Councillor Renold, representing the Operational Transport Working Party, attended the meeting and outlined the findings of the investigation and stated that although the aim had been to implement savings following the investigation this had not been achieved within the timescale allowed. A Project Team was now meeting on a regular basis to address issues highlighted in the report and to gain greater control over the Operational Transport Service. The Project Team were also tasked with enhancing the manual systems currently in use whilst a more suitable computerised package was sought.

The Committee considered the findings of the recent investigation and expressed concerns at the findings reported, and of the effects that the

overspend relating to Service User Transport, included within the current Adult and Community Service Budget, would have on front-line services provided by the department. Members referred to a potential overspend of £1.6million, and officers confirmed that a potential overspend of £1.2million in 2006/2007 on the former Social Care and Health portfolio, of which £0.7million would fall to the Adult and Community Services Department.

The Committee was informed that officers were striving to address the issues highlighted in the report and also looking at measures to bring the costs of the service down by initially assessing whether the current utilisation of staff and vehicles could be made more effective. Any changes that were identified, as part of this process, would be subject to the relevant Human Resources procedures. Members were urged to forward their views to the Project Team, prior to its next meeting in September 2006.

**RESOLVED:**

The Committee endorsed the following recommendations, as set out in the report: -

- 1) that in future, when Members are asked to endorse substantial savings to the Council's budget, that they are provided with a balanced picture regarding the nature of any savings and the background to them.

(This should include both the findings and recommendations from any reviews, the key areas of risks along with what action is being proposed to minimise their impact, the proposed monitoring and evaluation system for the savings and the inclusion of appropriate periodical updates to Members. Furthermore, such information should be couched in realistic terms, e.g. could, may, etc. save.)

- 2) that, where budgetary changes are made, following an organisational review, these changes and the reasons for such changes are formally reported to the Corporate Directors Board, Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees.

- 3) that the Council takes greater care in the future when purchasing IT software, or any resource, especially when they are associated with major budgetary decisions.

(In the case of software, comprehensive specifications agreed with users are required, and suppliers should be required to demonstrate that they meet the specification. If they cannot, an explanation of whether the package can be modified to meet the requirements should be provided, together with costs and timescales. Officers must ensure that software and other equipment does in fact deliver the performance that is required.)

- 4) that the officers involved with the Operational Transport Project Team outline how they intend to address the management information needs of the transport service and the weaknesses in its management structure when they present their proposals for the service in September 2006.

(In particular, officers should carry out an exercise as in recommendation 3 as a matter of urgency to identify suitable software to provide the basis of the management and cost information and control that is fundamental to making effective progress.)

- 5) that Cabinet receives a report from the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture concerning the Council's duties and responsibilities regarding 'Safeguarding Children and Adults' proposals for tightening up their systems for monitoring the enforcement of health and safety procedures for taxi firms and escorts so that this becomes a systematic feature of Operational Transport management and that consideration be given as to whether further training is required for officers.
- 6) that Cabinet considers placing the management and location of the operational transport service within one department.
- 7) that Cabinet ensures that any recommendations coming out of the work by the Operational Transport Working Party, that are later endorsed, are fully implemented and appropriate adjustment made to take account of any shortfall in resources that are identified. In addition, Cabinet should take all necessary action to ensure the serious corporate failings outlined in this report are not repeated.

The Committee also endorsed the following additional recommendation: -

- 8) that the attention of Cabinet be drawn to the fact that it is anticipated that the Adult and Community Services departmental budget 2006/2007 will incur an £0.7million overspend relating to Operational Transport. The Committee urges that any further efficiency savings, to meet this overspend, are not made at the expense of front line services.

