



MEETING OF THE CAPACITY & RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2004 2.30 PM

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor R Conboy
Councillor D Dexter
Councillor B Fines
Councillor J Kirkman

Councillor R Lovelock M.B.E. (Chairman)
Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor Mrs Percival (Vice-Chairman)

OFFICERS

Chief Executive
Scrutiny Officer
Director of Finance and Strategic Resources
Corporate Manager of Human Resources &
Organisational Development
Business Services Manager
Business Services Support Officer
Scrutiny Support Officer

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor N Dexter
Councillor Mrs Neal
Councillor J Thompson

6. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Morris.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared.

8. ACTION NOTES

These were received.

9. PROPOSAL TO SOUTH KESTEVEN DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR CORE FUNDING OF THE SOUTH KESTEVEN CITIZENS' ADVICE BUREAUX

The Chief Executive introduced to the panel Peter Cowley, Chief Executive of the Grantham Citizens' Advice Bureau, and David Berry, a business consultant from the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux (NACAB) who both spoke to the panel on the South Kesteven Citizens' Advice Bureau's (SKCAB) bid for a grant of £135,000, which included:

- Emphasis of various points from their business plan, which had been circulated with the agenda;
- Explanation of the confusion regarding the award of the LSC Quality Mark and confirmation that this had now been achieved for the whole of the SKCAB;
- Plans to increase opening hours at the Grantham CAB and to take on another volunteer;
- Explanation that outreach work in the Grantham area had not been successful due to the concentrated efforts on the relocation of the Grantham CAB; and
- The need for core funding from SKDC to maintain the current CAB service and to help secure additional funding from other bodies to finance the expansion of the Grantham service.

The panel questioned the CAB representatives on the following points:

- The major non-compliances of the SKCAB, which had been previously identified in an internal audit, and changes implemented to achieve the Quality Mark Status – *the representatives stated that all non-compliances had been rectified and changes implemented had included retraining, introduction of new systems and reformatting of the business plan;*
- The lack of rural outreach programmes – *the representatives had no knowledge of previous rural programmes but it was confirmed that the SKCAB would not be pursuing any more programmes due to the sensitive nature of providing an advice service in close-knit rural communities;*
- The possibility of transferring some of the volunteers from the Stamford CAB to Grantham – *this had been looked into but rejected due to the cost of commuting;*
- Whether the SKCAB could be accommodated in the SKDC offices to help reduce their costs – *although the CAB was already working closely with the Council on such issues as housing, the CAB was keen to retain its independence and would therefore require a separate public entrance. Also, it would not be of considerable help as most of the CAB costs were personnel related;*
- How confident the SKCAB was that it could receive additional funding – *reasonably confident that additional funding could be obtained but only if core funding was received first;*
- Information on the SKCAB reserves and funding from Lincolnshire County Council to which the representatives responded;
- How much funding other districts in Lincolnshire provided to the CABx in their areas and how much county councils in the East Midlands awarded CABx – *because this information was not available at the meeting, the representatives were asked to provide this information, together with details on rural outreach programmes and clarification on their commitment to the expansion of the Grantham CAB service, for the Cabinet meeting on 11th October 2004.*

The panel then considered whether or not the support the bid. It was agreed that the SKCAB had not complied with all the requirements set out by Cabinet in 2002 and it was also felt that because awarding the grant would nearly consume the relevant budget, this would be a great disservice to the other voluntary bodies throughout the district by preventing them from receiving a grant.

Conclusion:

The Capacity & Resources DSP recommends Cabinet does not support the SKCAB bid for a grant of £135,000. The reason for this recommendation is that the SKCAB failed to achieve the LSC Quality Mark by 31st March 2004.

10. CONSULTATION ON COMPLETING THE PRIORITISATION PROCESS

The Chief Executive gave a presentation on the Council's prioritisation process to date and the next steps to be taken. The views of the panel were asked on the methodology undertaken during the prioritisation process, the amount allocated to resource the priorities and the targets set for achieving improvements in the priority services.

During discussion on the presentation, some members expressed concern on the methodology undertaken and possible redundancies which might arise from the disinvestment in non-priority services but generally, the panel was satisfied on the priorities identified.

Conclusion:

The Capacity & Resources DSP supports the priority service categories.

With the agreement of the Chairman and the panel, agenda items 8, 9 and 11 were considered together.

11. LOCAL LOBBYING CAMPAIGN, BUDGET PLANNING 2005/2006 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Director of Finance & Strategic Resources gave a presentation on Budget Development 2005/06 and Beyond, which covered issues relating to agenda items 8, 9 and 11. He also referred to the background paper on Budget Consultation 2005/06, which set out medium term financial strategies and the main issues affecting the budget preparation for 2005/06.

Conclusion:

- **An additional meeting of the Capacity & Resources DSP be arranged for the 1st November 2004 at 2.30p.m. to consider Budget Planning and that the Chairmen of all other DSPs be invited to nominate a member from their panel to attend and participate in this meeting.**

- **The Capacity & Resources DSP supports the preparation of the 2005/06 Budget based on a 6% increase in Council Tax (in accordance with financial strategy number 8) and the recovery of Special Expense Area deficits as soon as is practicable.**
- **The DSP has no comments on the Capital Programme at this stage.**

12. MEASURING VALUE FOR MONEY

The Director of Finance & Strategic Resources presented report FIN204 which had been circulated with the agenda. The panel discussed this briefly with the director.

Conclusion:

- **To accept the report in the spirit in which it was presented**
- **To ask for details on where SKDC stands in comparison to other members of its family group**

13. CUSTOMER SERVICES STANDARDS

The Business Services Manager presented report CSV32 on behalf of the Customer Services Manager. This was discussed by the panel. Some concern was expressed regarding points 6 to 8 of the Customer Service Standards Charter as set out at Appendix A and B of the report. One member was also concerned about the last sentence of the section on what the council expects from its customers but the main concern was with regard to point three of the Charter.

Conclusion:

To recommend Cabinet considers the removal of “wear name badges and gives names so you know who you are talking to” from point 3 of the Customer Service Standards Charter because it is fundamental to the safety of Council staff that in some services, members of staff cannot be personally identified.

14. WORK PROGRAMME 2004/5

The panel considered the draft work programme circulated with the agenda.

Conclusion:

That a working group on the Internal Audit Contract comprise Councillors Kirkman, Lovelock and G. Taylor.

15. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 5.40p.m. Outstanding agenda items would be considered at a future meeting.