

Present:	Councillor David Grattrick (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Councillors:	Brent Charlesworth, Geoff Ellis, Ronald Hills, John Metcalfe and Ric Metcalfe
Also in Attendance:	Councillor Darren Grice (Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management)

1. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

2. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

3. Request to Call-In an Executive Decision

The Chairman advised members of the procedure to be followed in considering a Call-In request, and invited the councillors presenting the request, Councillors Nannestad and Smith, to speak to the Committee regarding it.

Councillor Smith outlined her concerns relating to the decision by Executive regarding the Community Services Contract [minute no. 165], focusing upon the value for money offered by the contract and the services incorporated within it. The grounds for Call-In were explained to be that the decision could not be justified and was open to challenge on the basis of the evidence considered. It was noted that concessions had previously been achieved following recommendations from the Policy Scrutiny Committee, and, given the value of the contract, further comparatively small concessions ought to have been achieved with regard to the Assisted Bulky Collections service.

Councillor Nannestad supported the points put forward by Councillor Smith, similarly noting concerns regarding potentially increased amounts of fly-tipping and the administrative burden relating to limiting eligibility for a free Assisted Bulky Collections service.

The Chairman invited members to question the councillors who had requested the Call-In.

Members:

- questioned what the cost of providing eligibility testing would be in comparison to providing a universal service.
- questioned whether the proposing councillors understood which party would bear any additional costs in relation to fly-tipping or checking residents' eligibility for services, and noted that the terms offered by the contractor could not be dictated.
- noted that the Council was a paying customer, and so should play an active role in negotiating amenable terms.
- discussed whether any additional costs would be payable by the Council with regard to fly-tipping under the proposed terms, noting that if more than a certain amount of work were undertaken in a given time period additional costs would be incurred by the Council.
- questioned whether any additional figures were available regarding the number of persons who would be eligible for the free Assisted Bulky Collections service.
- questioned whether previous concessions on the contract had resolved the councillors' concerns with regard to the volume of potential fly-tipping.

The members requesting the Call-In responded that:

- no additional information had been made available to them with regard to members' questions, and noted that an informed decision could not have been made without this information.
- previous concessions with regard to fly-tipping had improved the situation to a degree.
- proving that a person met the eligibility criteria for the free Assisted Bulky Collections service would be administratively complex.

The Chairman invited the relevant Executive member to resolve any matters requiring clarification.

Councillor D. Grice, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Management:

- explained that he was the accountable member of Executive with regard to the requested Call-In, given his responsibility for the tendering process and the service review process.
- noted that the fly-tipping service could not be subject to any means testing.
- stated that the councillors requesting the Call-In had made reference to value for money, but had not adequately explained how the contract failed to meet the key objectives in determining whether a service offered good value for money.
- explained that the 2006 tendering process had been a thorough and expensive process.

The Chairman invited members to question the Councillor Grice.

Members:

- questioned whether Councillor Grice was satisfied that the cost of administering an eligibility scheme would not be greater than allowing a universal Assisted Bulky Collections service.
- stated that it was necessary for members to be properly informed as to why a re-

tendering exercise had not taken place, acknowledging that the decision could be correct but ought to be demonstrated to be so.

- drew attention to paragraph 4.6 of the report to Executive, noting that it would appear that the cost of administering any eligibility scheme would be the Council's, rather than the contractor's, and questioned whether a shift in responsibility could be negotiated with the contractor.
- questioned whether the contract negotiated represented the best available to the Council.
- questioned whether it had been anticipated that a reduction in costs would be possible given inflationary pressures since agreeing the original contract.

Councillor Grice responded that:

- the administration of the Assisted Bulky Collections service would not cause any additional cost for the Council.
- the judgement as to whether re-tendering would be beneficial was subjective, but when considering the associated costs for all parties and the disincentives to the existing contractor, a higher cost to the Council was possible. High satisfaction levels with the current contractor were also to be noted.
- priorities in the negotiations had been achieved by the Council, but that there would always be a point at which no further concessions could be granted, and discussions could have been jeopardised if pushed further.
- early discussions with other providers and with adjoining local authorities had established that the contract represented the best deal available.
- higher costs for the contractor had not been reflected in the original contract and that most recently proposed. This was particularly true in relation to increased fuel costs.

The Head of Community Services, Leisure and Sport confirmed, at members' request, that the administrative process for confirming residents' eligibility for services could be accommodated within existing structures and budgets without additional cost.

Having considered the information provided to it, members voted upon the determination of the request for Call-In.

RESOLVED that the Call-In request be refused.