

COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**COMMENTS ON THE REVISED ESTIMATE 2002/03 AND
REVENUE BUDGET 2003/04**

The Community Services Scrutiny Committee met on Monday 20th January 2003. The following members of the Cabinet attended the meeting to respond to questions by the Committee:

Prof M E Preston CC – Deputy Leader of the Council
Mr E F White CC – Cabinet Lead Member for Libraries

At the beginning of consideration of this item, the following motion was moved by Mr Lucas and seconded by Mrs Bill:-

“That the meeting be now adjourned until the Committee receives proper and adequate information to enable it to scrutinise the proposed Revised Estimate for 2002/03 and the Revenue Budget for 2003/04”.

The motion was put to the vote, but was not carried, 2 members voting for the motion and 9 members voting against.

REVISED ESTIMATE 2002/03

Comments/Issues Raised

It was noted that admissions income in 2002/03 was £18,000 higher than anticipated. This was due to better than expected paying visitor activities, primarily to Snibston Discovery Park. The effect of this may be to reduce the need for the subsidy required for Snibston Discovery Park longer term. A sum of £167, 000 was added to last year’s budget to cover an anticipated shortfall in income at the Snibston Discovery Park

Decisions

That the Scrutiny Commission be recommended to note the Revised Estimates for 2002/03.

REVENUE BUDGET 2003/04

Comments/Issues Raised

During the discussion, concerns were raised regarding:

- (a) The proposed saving of £35,000 by reducing external grants for hedge laying. It was explained that this action was proposed because most of the grants had been awarded to large organisations that were able to pay for this work themselves. However, if other projects were put forward these would be considered. Some concern was expressed that the deletion of these grants might be contrary to the Council’s policies for conserving the environment.

- (b) The absence of any provision to increase the budget for grants to independent museums. The Deputy Leader stated that there was no proposal to remove that support.

The Committee also noted the following:

- (c) The growth provision of £375,000 for the Peoples Network was to cover the running costs and the additional staffing required to help the public use the IT facilities. The capital costs had been funded by the Government through the New Opportunities Fund.
- (d) A study by consultants on the operation and funding of Citizens Advice Bureaux had recently been completed. Pending consideration by the Cabinet of the Consultant's report, provision of £50,000 in 2003/04 and £100,000 in 2004/05 and 2005/06 had been included for service improvements arising from the review of Citizen Advice Bureaux.
- (e) The growth provision of £50,000 for the Libraries Service Bookfund would enable further progress to be made to bring the County Council in line with the county average.
- (f) The efficiency savings on staffing and running costs at the Snibston Discovery Park were expected to be achieved without redundancies and by rationalising ranger activities undertaken at Snibston Discovery Park and the Country Parks.

Decisions

That the Scrutiny Commission be recommended to note the Revenue Budget proposals for 2003/04.

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