

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Wednesday, 17 December 2003
(5:00 - 6:15 pm)

Present: Councillor Mrs P A Twomey (Chair), Councillor H J Collins (Deputy Chair), Councillor W F L Barns, Councillor L A Collins, Councillor J R Denyer and Councillor Mrs M M West.

Also Present: Councillor M A McCarthy and Councillor A G Thomas (Call-In Members) and Councillor C J Fairbrass and Councillor L A Smith (representing the Executive) and Councillor T J Justice and Councillor Mrs V M Rush

Apologies: Councillor Mrs J Conyard

45. Call-In - Members' Telephones and Out of Hours I.T. Support

The Board considered a Call-In following the Executive's decision of 25 November 2003 clarifying issues associated with Members' telephones. Call-In Members commented that:

- all Members should be treated equally in terms of mobile telephone allocations and connections to the Centrex system.
- the Members' basic allowance should cover all telephone calls.

Clarification was also sought as to what percentage of the Members' allowance can be offset against tax for the telephone element.

Councillors Fairbrass and Smith responded on behalf of the Executive. They referred to the current Member allocation of mobile telephones and connections to the Centrex system and the reasons why Members holding certain positions need to be contactable at all times.

All parties withdrew at 5.40 p.m. for the Board to deliberate and reconvened at 6.10 p.m. for the Board's decision.

After weighing up all the evidence the Board considers that

- (i) all Members should be treated equally in relation to the provision and related costs of telephones for Council business use, and as such **all** costs should be borne by Members from their Members' allowances
- (ii) there should be no exception to this rule, either now or in the future, and accordingly (a) those with mobile telephones provided by the Council should be required to discontinue their use and hand them back, and (b) the one remaining Centrex line connection should be disconnected

- (iii) should any Member position require a mobile telephone or other similar means of contact or communication, the Member holding that position should personally purchase the necessary equipment and pay for all costs, again making use of their basic or, where appropriate, special responsibility allowance.

The Board therefore asks the Executive to revise their original decision concerning telephones for Members accordingly, that is by reconfirming the original decision number 1 in relation to the telephone handsets provided with the computer equipment, but deleting 2 and 3 and replacing them with (i), (ii) and (iii) above. [The original decision number 4 is unaffected as this relates to IT support for Members, not telephones.]

The Board has asked the Director of Finance to issue general tax guidance to all Members.