

STRATEGY & PARTNERSHIPS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 25 November 2009 commencing at 11.00 am and finishing at 12.25 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Dr Peter Skolar – in the Chair

Councillor Norman Bolster
Councillor Arash Fatemian
Councillor Jean Fooks
Councillor A.M. Lovatt
Councillor Chip Sherwood
Councillor Melinda Tilley (Deputy Chairman)
Councillor David Wilmshurst

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Keith Mitchell, CBE (for Agenda Item 5)

Officers:

Whole of meeting Corporate Performance & Review Manager;
S. Whitehead (Corporate Core)

Part of meeting

Agenda Item

Officer Attending

5	Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer L. Baxter (Financial Services)
6	C. Evans (Partnerships and Communities Team)

The Scrutiny Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.

21/09 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Liz Brighthouse and Nick Carter.

22/09 MINUTES

(Agenda No. 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2009 were approved and signed.

23/09 SERVICE & RESOURCE PLANNING 2010/11 - 2014/15

(Agenda No. 5)

SYP3

The Committee considered a report (**SYP5**) and presentation, setting out the Business Improvement & Efficiency Strategies for each Directorate and the identified pressures and proposed savings contained therein. They were asked to consider the overall position for the Council, the balance of pressures and savings across the Directorates and the Business Improvement & Efficiency Strategies for all Directorates.

In response to questions the following information, points of clarification were obtained::

- 1) the proposals did not reflect a worst case scenario but were based on the best estimates currently available. It was noted that further information might be available following the pre budget speech on 9 December. The Plan was about being prepared for what was realistically expected to happen and a cautious approach was taken to allow proper planning.
- 2) The assumptions behind the figures included for inflation were explained.
- 3) It was explained that although it was correct that the shortfall would hit hardest in later years by front loading savings it allowed investment to save measures to be undertaken.
- 4) Targets were based on controllable spend.

The Leader sought a view from Members on the level of Council tax rise that they thought would be reasonable. There would be difficult choices during the current budget process. Factors involved in forming a view could be the financial position of the Council, the struggle people were having in the current economic situation and the impact of the capital grant settlement. The Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer added that key issues were the level of inflation and a concern over people's ability to pay. She gave some indication of the effect of reducing the figure, explaining that a 0% figure would mean a deficit in the first year.

During discussion a member commented that it was a question of balance, with choices to be made between savings and services and the individual Scrutiny Committees would make comments based on the detailed consideration of programme areas. One member felt that the current assumption of 3.75% was reasonable but generally there was a view that the figure should be below 3% although there was a recognition that it would be difficult for it to be much below that figure. The Chairman commented on his wish to see a figure below 3% but at same time to protect statutory and vital services.

RESOLVED:

- a) as more particular referred to above the Committee commented on the uncertainty surrounding budget assumptions; sought explanation of the figure included for inflation and noted the importance of the investment to save approach;
- b) to note that the Directorate Business Improvement & Efficiency Strategies plus the pressures and savings therein will be considered by the Service Scrutiny committees, their comments being fed back to Strategy & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee for consideration in January 2010;

SYP3

- c) to note the individual member comments made on the appropriateness of the Council tax figure included in the existing MTFP and that generally there was a view that given the current economic position the figure should be kept below 3%.
- d) to invite the Chairmen of the Service Scrutiny Committees to attend the Strategy & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee on 17th December 2009 to comment on the capital proposals.

24/09 SCRUTINY OF PARTNERSHIPS
(Agenda No. 6)

RESOLVED: to:

- (a) receive an overview of partnerships, looking at responsibilities and accountability, including the role of the Public Service Board; and
- (b) agree that the timetable for looking at particular partnerships be based on seeing those longest established first and newer partnerships later.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing 2009

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