

## **CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Wednesday 17 December 2008 at  
6.00pm

**Panel Members Present**     Councillor M Longhi (Chair)  
   Councillor M Flower  
   Councillor K Chambers  
   Councillor H Sarohi  
   Councillor M Yasin  
   Councillor Turner

**Other Members Present**     Councillor Hughes (Chair, Children & Young People's  
   Panel)  
   Councillor D Pitt (Chair, Regeneration Panel)  
   Councillor C Towe (Chair, Neighbourhoods Panel)  
   Councillor C Creaney (Vice-Chair, Neighbourhoods Panel)  
   Councillor C Ault (Vice-Chair, Health, Social Care &  
   Inclusion Panel)

**Officers Present**     Michael Tomlinson- Corporate Finance & Treasury Manager  
   Colin Teasdale- Performance and Scrutiny Officer

*The Chair welcomed Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the 4 other Scrutiny and Performance Panels to the meeting.*

### **53/08 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Bird, Cook, Nazir and Oliver (Chair, Health Social Care & Inclusion Panel)

### **54/08 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitution(s) for the duration of this meeting.

### **55/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting

### **56/08 Budget Recommendations from Scrutiny and Performance Panels**

The Chair invited each of the Chairs from other Panels to represent their panel's views to the Corporate Panel on the budget recommendations for services within each of their panel's remits.

In discussions the Panel agreed with all the points raised by the Panels and with the recommendations they had put forward to Cabinet, however they suggested some additions or alterations as set out in the resolution below.

### **Resolved**

- 1. That in considering the presentations from each of the other Scrutiny Chairs, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel support the recommendations as set out by the other scrutiny and performance panels, with the following additions and amendments:**

#### **Health, Social Care and Inclusion**

- That Cabinet ensure that, built into the budget are resources to support any contingency plan needed in the case of further instances in social care such as that of the collapse of Southern Cross.

#### **Neighbourhoods**

- That Cabinet continue with the illuminations in 2009, on the understanding that the viability of the event is based on a business case approved by the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel with a view to ensuring that the event is, at the very least, cost neutral.
- Investigations be undertaken to establish the cost of modifying car park machines to include functionality to print car registration numbers on tickets and offer alternative, more flexible, methods of payment.

#### **Regeneration**

- Realistic and achievable budgets for services areas are set, for example with profit targets for Walsall Market.
- That consideration of Council communication material be looked at through the Value for Money assessment of the Communications Service currently be carried out by the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

#### **Corporate**

- That a full options appraisal of the Payroll service be carried out, following on from the work done with the scrutiny VFM toolkit, including looking at providing payroll services to other organisations at a profit, with an ambition towards making this service cost neutral within three years.

### **57/08 Consideration of Council Wide Budget for 2009/10 to 2011/12**

Members commented that they were disappointed with the lack of detailed information provided to them in the budget process that would have enabled them to make more meaningful recommendations.

In considering the council wide budget position, they felt that Cabinet were faced with an extremely challenging job this year to deliver a balanced budget in the current economic climate. In recognising this, they commented that they would be supportive of a higher council tax rise but felt that it was important to avoid running the risk of being subject to central government capping which would produce unwanted delays in service delivery. Whilst no precise information was available, based on comments from central government and in line with capping levels from previous years, it was agreed that the upper threshold would probably be somewhere around 5% and therefore they should avoid anything above this.

#### **Resolved**

- 1. That in considering the Council wide budget position, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel find it regrettable that Scrutiny panels were not provide with enough information on costs to allow meaningful recommendations to be made.**
- 2. The Panel notes that a council tax rise above 5% may be deemed as excessive by the Government and run the risk of grant capping. However, in the current economic climate, where the Council is under significant budgetary pressure due to a fall in income and rise in costs, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel would be supportive of a Council tax rise of just less than 5% subject to any further information that may come to light.**

#### **58/08 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 23 January 2009

The meeting terminated at 7.30pm