

## **CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Friday 23 January 2009 at 6.00pm

**Panel Members Present** Councillor M Longhi (Chair)  
Councillor M Bird  
Councillor K Chambers  
Councillor J Cook  
Councillor M Nazir  
Councillor H Sarohi  
Councillor K Sears  
Councillor M Yasin  
Councillor Turner

**Officers Present** Tim Johnson- Executive Director, Regeneration  
James Walsh- Chief Finance Officer  
Bhupinder Gill- Assistant Director, Legal & Constitutional Services  
Michael Tomlinson- Corporate Finance & Treasury Manager  
Colin Teasdale- Performance and Scrutiny Officer

### **59/08 APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor M Flower

### **60/08 SUBSTITUTIONS**

The following substitution(s) to the panel were submitted for the duration of the meeting:-

- Delete: Councillor Flower
- Substitute: Councillor Sears

### **61/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

Councillor Cook declared the party whip with regard to item 6 on the agenda *Draft Corporate Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2009/10 to 2011/12* and stated his intention to abstain from any votes on this item.

### **62/08 FORWARD PLAN**

The Forward Plan as at 6 January 2009 was submitted.

Members discussed the item 113/08 *Walsall Arboretum* but as this fell within the remit of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel and was already on their work programme it was left for that panel to discuss fully.

### **63/08 DRAFT CORPORATE REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10 TO 2011/12**

Michael Tomlinson introduced the report (annexed) and tabled the recommendations for other scrutiny and performance panels (annexed) along with a summary of the previous recommendations made by the corporate panel against the proposals put forward by cabinet (annexed.)

Members queried the rate of inflation that was being used and were informed that this depended on the type of expenditure and so varied throughout the budget, for example salaries was 2.5% whilst some contracts were tied in to an inflationary uplift at predetermined rate.

The Chair stated that he saw no reason to question the recommendations from other panels and asked other members if they had any comments or if they were happy to accept them. Members agreed to support the recommendations as set out.

The Panel noted that the Cabinet proposals included an investment to make the Welfare Rights service core funded, as this was a point which they had long supported they were please to see that Cabinet had listened to their recommendation of 11 December and included this in the budget. Members commented that the next step should be to look at the consolidation of the welfare rights service with the fairer charging team in social care and James Walsh confirmed that this was an ongoing piece of work.

The Panel also noted that their previous recommendation had been for any further savings needed within finance should come from back room functions in order to protect frontline services and noted that this had been accepted.

In looking at the finance proposals for legal services the panel noted that their recommendation for the protection of this service at current levels was reflected in the cabinet proposals, including an investment bid to make up the shortfall resulting from a drop in income.

When examining the proposals for Transformation, members asked a number of questions with regard to the detail of some of the items, in particular with regard to the EDMS system and its potential roll-out. Tim Johnson confirmed that this was part of the adaptive working stream of the transformation programme.

Members queried the reduction of a 25hr business support post to legal services, Cllr Arif stated that this post had been vacant for 10 months without impacting on the service so the decision had been taken that it could be cut.

Members noted item 88 on the proposals for the removal of the redeployment support team. Tim Johnson said that this was a change in the model of support, putting the onus back on managers themselves, rather than a reduction in the actual level of support.

In considering the budget proposals for the services within the remit of the Corporate Panel, members agreed with the proposal put forward, with the exception of Cllr Cook who abstained.

In considering the overall budget proposals, some members felt it was impossible to commit to supporting the budget without knowing the overall council tax increase.

The resolution to 'commend the overall revenue budget report to Cabinet' was proposed and seconded. At vote this was carried with 5 votes and 4 abstentions.

The resolution to 'commend the overall capital budget report to Cabinet' was proposed and seconded. At vote this was carried with 5 votes and 4 abstentions.

**Resolved:**

**That the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel, with one abstention:**

- 1. Endorse the budget recommendations of the other scrutiny panels as set out;**
- 2. Note their thanks to Cabinet for listening to their request and making the important welfare rights service core funded;**
- 3. Support the savings and investments proposals in relation to Finance Services;**
- 4. Support the savings and investments proposals in relation to legal services;**
- 5. Support the savings proposals in relation to Transformation;**
- 6. Support the savings proposals in relation to Corporate Performance Management**

**That the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel, with 5 votes for and 4 abstentions:**

- 7. Commend the overall revenue budget report to Cabinet**

**8. Commend the overall capital budget report to Cabinet.**

**64/08 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 26 February 2009 at 6pm.

*The meeting terminated at 7.15 pm*