

CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Tuesday, 31 January, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. in a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Panel Members Present

Councillor S. Coughlan (Chair)
Councillor M. Flower (Vice-Chair)
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker
Councillor J. Murray
Councillor I. Shires

Portfolio holders present

Councillor Mohammed Arif - Business Support Services
Councillor Chris Towe - Finance and personnel

Officers Present

Rory Borealis – Executive Director (Resources)
Stephanie Simcox – Service Accounting and Financial Training Manager
Paul Milmore - Head of Business Solutions

109/12 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were received on behalf of Councillors D. Shires, K. Hussain and M. Nazir.

110/12 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor I. Shires substituted for Councillor D. Shires.

111/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

112/12 MINUTES

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December, 2011, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

113/12 DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2012/13 FOR CONSULTATION AND CORPORATE FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE FROM 2011/12

Members received a report as submitted to Cabinet at its meeting on 14 December, 2011, which outlined changes from the first draft budget to Cabinet on 14 September, 2011 and subsequent amendments in the second draft budget report to Cabinet on 9 November, 2011.

A query was raised in relation to the saving within the transport and environment portfolio which reduced the twenty four hour temporary repairs requirement to five days response in accordance with national guidelines. Concern was expressed that the process of making permanent repairs was slipping and reverting back to temporary repairs. Members were advised that the Tarmac contract was scheduled to be considered by the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel in March, 2012. The clerk advised that he would notify Members of the date of the meeting once it had been agreed.

Discussion was held on the centralised storage of workstation drive data as the costs of servers had increased considerably. Members were assured that officers would ensure that the correct approach would be taken which best suited the needs of the Authority. Overall, the intention was to move away from hard drives and to retain all records on servers.

In relation to the savings made by consolidating the Councils two telephone systems, Members sought clarity as to how many years it would take for the efficiencies to pay for the investment of the new telephone system. Officers advised that the Council maintained two main telephone systems which introduced unnecessary costs and required IT support staff to be skilled in both systems. There were a number of issues created by having two telephonic systems which can and do lead to customers being unable to contact the Council. The costs of supporting these two systems were unavoidable. Officers agreed to provide further detail to Members of the Panel in writing.

Members sought further detail in relation to hardware and software licences and infra-structures for the Web. Officers undertook to provide a written response.

In relation to the electronic document management system, Members noted that this was a Council-wide investment which would result in savings from staff time, accommodation, storage and improved productivity. Members enquired as to which system had been chosen to which it was reported that an update would be provided in writing.

In relation to disaster recovery, it was stated that the Council had an arrangement in place whereby information was stored by another Authority. In relation to physical documents, it was reported that the Council used Iron Mountain who stored records off-site. The Executive Director (Resources) stated that the whole issue was being systematically reviewed to ensure that documents and information was kept secure. It was suggested that this issue could be considered further at a future meeting of Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

There then followed a period of questioning in relation to the lighting invest save initiative which sought to reduce energy consumption and maintenance costs of the lighting service. Savings made from this initiative would be confirmed when trials had been completed. In relation to this matter, Members questioned where the trials were taking place. Officers reported that they would investigate this matter and provide a written response.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That the security of documentation be added as an item on the work programme for Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel.
- (3) That officers undertake to provide a written response in relation to:-
 - Telephony Consolidation
 - IT Support to smarter workplaces programme
 - Lighting invest to save initiatives

114/12 BUDGET CONSULTATION FEEDBACK 2012/13

Members considered a report which summarised the findings from budget consultation to support the decision making regarding the Council's draft budget proposals 2012/13.

In relation to the budget simulation tool, it was stated that it was disappointing that relatively few people visited the site and used the simulation tool. It was asked whether or not there was a facility on the system to prevent visitors completing the programme more than once. It was stated that this matter would be investigated.

It was suggested that an item be placed on the agenda for a future meeting of the Panel as to how information could be captured when customers contact the Council and fed into the budget consultation process.

Resolved

- 1) That the report be noted;
- 2) That the budget consultation process be included as an agenda item for a future meeting of the Panel.

115/12 WORKING SMARTER UPDATE

Members received a report updating them on the progress of the working smarter programme.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

116/12 WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12 AND FORWARD PLAN

Resolved

That the work programme and forward plan be noted.

117/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would take place on 27 February, 2012.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 7.20 p.m.

Signed:

Date: