

CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 11 September 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present Councillor M. Longhi (Chair)
Councillor Nazir (Vice-Chair)
Councillor M. Bird
Councillor J. Cook
Councillor J. Phillips
Councillor D. Turner
Councillor M. Flower
Councillor M. Yasin

Portfolio Holder Present Councillor A. Griffiths

Officers present Tim Johnson – Executive Director - Regeneration Services
James Walsh – Assistant Director – Finance
Bhupinder Gill - Assistant Director –
Law & Constitutional Services
Helen Dudson – Acting Corporate Performance Manager
Lorenzo Visentin - Manager of SHAW Services
Kevin Kendall - Head of Property Services
Steve Law - Service Manager - Estates & Property Manager
Michael Tomlinson - Corporate Finance & Treasury Manager
Jody Latham – Performance and Scrutiny Officer

20/08 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Sarohi.

21/08 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting.

22/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were declarations of prejudicial interest made by Cllr Longhi, Nasir and Flower in respect of item 67/08 *Review of Council Tax discounts on second homes and long term empty premises* on the Forward Plan and agreed to leave the room while the item was discussed. It was agreed by the Panel that Cllr Bird would chair the Panel for the duration of this item.

23/08 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The panel requested an update on '12/08 Training opportunities' be included on the next agenda for the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Resolved:

That:

1. That the Assistant Director for Transformation provide the Panel with an update on ensuring future training opportunities are presented with more information to encourage member attendance;
2. That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2008, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record. (annexed)

24/08 FORWARD PLAN

The Panel considered the Forward Plan that was issued on 7 April 2008.

In regard to item *67/08 Review of Council Tax discounts on second homes and long term empty premises* Councillors Longi, Nasir and Flower vacated the room and Councillor Bird took the Chair.

It was agreed by the Panel that they would like the opportunity to discuss the item prior to any Cabinet or Council decision and requested the Portfolio Holder approach the next Cabinet 17 September to put forward their request.

Resolved

That:

The Portfolio Holder approach the next Cabinet 17 September to put forward their request to review item *67/08 Review of Council Tax discounts on second homes and long term empty premises*.

25/08 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Panel were informed of the training opportunities available to them and advised to contact the Scrutiny Team should they wish to attend any.

26/08 AREA BASED GRANT

The Panel were informed that there had been two significant changes to the Local Government White Paper (October 2006) – "*Strong and Prosperous Communities*",

1. Funding is agreed for a three-year period

2. A number of grants have been transferred in to the Area-Based Grant. These grants are, for the most part, funding the council has received historically. However, some of these grants are reducing (Neighbourhood Element – now Stronger and Safer), some have been discontinued (Neighbourhood Renewal Funding) and some are new (Working Neighbourhoods Fund and Community Cohesion).

The Panel were informed that due to a lack of further information at this point in time a broader discussion would be better taken place at the next CSPP on 23 October 2008 when it is expected there will be further information available to Officers and Members.

Resolved

That:

The Area Based Grant item be brought to the next Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 23 October 2008.

27/08 ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Kevin Kendall presented to the Panel an overview of the corporate asset management plan (AMP) updated to reflect achievements and changes in Council and national policies and invited comments and questions from members.
(annexed)

A report to cabinet in September will be an update of the previous plan, last presented to cabinet in 2006. The plan sets out the Councils Property policy and vision for Property Assets and describes the strategy to support this. The plan identifies key objectives for property assets.

The Panel were informed that the Vision of the AMP was drafted by Property services in consultation with the Asset Management Team.

Questionnaires will be sent out to targeted individuals to assess property assets. Where more radical or strategic decisions are required more than one person will be involved in the assessment.

The Panel were informed that the AMP is essential a property strategy and is one that has been tried and tested across many other authorities. It will be reviewed against set targets on an annual basis once up and running and will be an enabler for challenging poor performing contractors and taking back assets in those areas.

Resolved

That:

An Asset Management Plan update comes to the Panels 26 February meeting.

28/08 SAFETY AND HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Lorenzo Visentin informed the Panel of the outcomes from the Health and Safety Executive inspection. The result of the inspection found no issues and challenged the Chief Executive to provide information on 2 randomly selected items by a set deadline. Walsall Council were able to meet and exceed expectations of Her Majesties Inspectorate who later commended the authority for their achievements.

The Panel wished to express their congratulations to the SHIP team via Lorenzo Visentin.

Resolved

That:

A formal SHIP monitoring report is brought to the Panel early in the New Year (23 January meeting).

29/08 RESOURCE PLANNING 2009/10 – 2001/12

Michael Tomlinson verbally presented to the Panel an overview of the resource packs previously circulated to them.

The Panel were informed that the resource packs provided to them were working documents aimed at helping and guiding them throughout the budget setting process.

The Panel discussed, due to the size of the task, the possibility of looking in depth at their own resource pack and ask others to do the same providing the CSPP with a summary of their findings.

The Panel were informed that at their meeting of the 23 October 2008 they will be provided with an overview of the budget and its figures, along with a summary of the information provided to each panel. Following this chairs and Vice-Chairs of the respective panels would be invited to the Corporate panel's decision conference event on 11 December to present their individual panels findings.

Resolved

That:

- 1) To ask officers to review and summarise the resource packs from individual panels and provide the Corporate Panel with that summary in readiness for their next meeting on 23 October 2008.**
- 2) That the Chairs and vicechairs of each panel be invited to the Corporate panel's decision conference event on 11 December to present their individual panel's findings.**

The meeting terminated at 8.15 p.m.

Chair:

Date: