

CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Tuesday, 13 September, 2011 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 J. Cook
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker
Councillor M. Longhi
Councillor J. Murray
Councillor J. Rochelle

Portfolio holders present Councillor C. Towe - Finance and personnel

Officers Present

Rory Borealis – Executive Director (Resources)
Tim Johnson – Executive Director (Regeneration)
Paul Gordon – Head of Business Change
Steph Simcox - Service Accounting & Financial Training Manager
Martin Sadler – Head of Shared Services & Procurement
Paul Milmore – Head of Business Solutions
Mark Bassett – Smarter Workplaces Programme Manager
Neil Picken – Senior Constitutional Services Officer

78/11 APOLOGIES

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

79/11 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor J. Cook substitute for Councillor D. Shires.

80/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

81/11 MINUTES

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 August, 2011, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

82/11 FINANCE DIRECT

The Chair advised the Panel that this item had been deferred and would be considered at the meeting scheduled to be held on 27th October, 2011.

83/11 WORKING SMARTER

Members considered a report and received a presentation (annexed) updating the Panel on the progress of the working smarter programme. Particular focus was given in relation to the smarter workplace programme.

In relation to smarter workplaces objectives, Members queried the outcome of the trial of the model office on the third floor of the Civic. In response, it was stated that whilst the model office worked well physically, new ways of working had not been embedded sufficiently and so many staff had reverted back to usual ways of working. It was this 'embedding' aspect which would require a lot of hard work to make the smarter workplace programme successful.

Members asked how the new way of working would differ to that of existing practice. In reply, it was stated that one of the working smarter streams focussed on providing a fit for future work team. It was this workstream which would identify how people needed to work differently to maximise their environment. It was stressed that the proposed new way of working would result in a better use of time as well as delivering a better service to customers.

With regard to timescales, Members were advised that the programme would commence in October, 2011 and run to the end of 2012. It would be undertaken in four phases with teams relocated to ensure that they work alongside those most logical to the work they undertake.

In response to a question relating to the benefits of home working, it was stated that there were clear benefits. Five members of staff were trialling home working initiatives and IT were addressing technology matters to ensure that all data transferred and stored would be confidential and secure.

Members sought clarity on the Vanguard approach. Officers advised that it was a systems thinking approach whereby those providing services walked the customer journey to understand and map it through each area. This in turn enabled officers to understand demand and re shape the organisation appropriately. These changes would eradicate unwanted demand and focus on that demand that added real value to customers.

There then followed further discussion on the security of home working. Officers advised that there would be a 'secure token' approach with sufficient software and programmes utilised to ensure that the internet connection was secure. There would also be a password required to access information. Members were assured that no data would be kept at home on a PC as this would not be physically possible. All data would be saved at the Council. Members asked what would happen if the system went down. It was accepted that should this occur, the officer(s) concerned would then have to come into the building to do the work they wished to undertake at home.

In relation to disposing of assets, it was asked why the decision had been taken to sell assets in a turbulent market. It was suggested that it was now a good time to buy rather than sell. In response, it was stated that the project required capital investment of £5.7m and estimated capital receipts were expected to be £7.2m. The additional money would be ring fenced to repay the original investment. It was further stated that smarter workplaces was only a small part of the Council's overall asset management process of circa £750m.

Members asked a specific question in relation to the number of people moving to the Civic Centre. Officers agreed to circulate this information to Members of the Panel.

Resolved

- 1) That the report be noted;
- 2) That details in relation to the number of staff being relocated be circulated to Members of the Panel.

84/11 RESOURCES 2010/11 FINAL BUDGETARY POSITION PRE-AUDIT

Members received a report summarising the pre-audit revenue and capital outturn position for 2010/11 for services within the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

The Panel noted that the 2010/11 pre-audit year end financial position for services under the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel was an underspend of £1.708m, after the use of approved reserves and carry forwards and action plans. There was an underspend of £1.557m in the capital schemes within the remit of the panel; however slippage of £1.310m has been requested.

Resolved

That the 2010/11 pre-audit year end financial position for services under the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted.

85/11 QUARTER 1 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION 2011/12

Members received a report summarising the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2011/12 based on the performance for Quarter 1 (April - June, 2011), services within the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

The Panel noted that the 2011/12 forecasted year end financial position for services under the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel was an overspend of £154k, after the use of approved reserves and carry forwards. A directorate approach would be taken to identify corrective action plans to mitigate this overspend. The capital forecast was on budget.

Resolved

That the 2011/12 forecast year end financial position for services under the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted.

86/11 WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12 AND FORWARD PLAN

Resolved

That the work programme and forward plan be noted.

87/11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted as 27 October, 2011.

The meeting terminated at 7.50 p.m.

Signed:

Date: