

ITEM 4

AT A MEETING

- of the -

**RESOURCES AND
PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY
AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

held at the Council House,
Walsall on **22 June 2005** at
6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Sanders (Chair)
Councillor Sarohi (Vice Chair)
Councillor Chambers
Councillor Griffiths
Councillor Micklewright
Councillor Rochelle
Councillor D Shires
Councillor Turner
Councillor Young

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Rob Flinter, (Head of Performance Management)
Vicky Crowshaw, (Head of Corporate & Strategic Finance)

SCRUTINY SUPPORT

Helen Dudson, (Service Development & Interim Scrutiny Manager)
Stuart Bentley, (Scrutiny Support Officer)

Councillor Sanders began by expressing his thanks to Councillors Underhill and Anson for their work over the last municipal year and by welcoming the new members to the Panel.

1. APOLOGIES

Councillor Longhi (Portfolio holder) gave his apologies.

2 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no changes in membership

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

The members of the political groups represented on the Panel indicated there were no whipping arrangements for any of the political parties in respect of items on the agenda. There were no declarations of interest.

4 MEETING ETIQUETTE

Councillor Sanders gave a brief overview of the remit of the Panel for the new members. He said that the Panel should look at items that they could change. He wanted to make 6 recommendations to Cabinet last year, and actually made more, so would like to be able to do something similar this year.

The Panel's approach to the work was that of positive and friendly criticism, inclusive, blameless, respectful and polite.

He particularly encouraged the idea of members bringing learning points from other councils and the development of a view of trends outside the boundaries of Walsall.

Councillor Turner echoed the interest in widening the view of the Panel and raised the idea of Web Cam broadcasts of the Panel meetings. Helen Dudson said that officers were investigating possible networking methods and would feedback to the Panel in due course.

5 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 24 MARCH 2005

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Resource and Performance Scrutiny and Performance Panel be confirmed and signed as an accurate record by the Chair.

6 REVIEW OF THE PANEL'S WORK PROGRAMME 2004/5

Councillor Sanders suggested that the Panel note the report and recognise the good work done in the last municipal year. There was general agreement.

Resolved

- That the Panel note the report on the review of the panel's work programme 2004/5.

7 SCOPING THE WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2005/6

Councillor Sanders said that the report was a good outline of the directorate. He then said that the Panel should focus on specifics and that any established working groups should work to specific remits and timescales. Further, he stated that the full Panel should aim to complete all work streams by the middle of February to facilitate the drafting of the end of year review document for Council.

Vicky Crowshaw then gave a presentation outlining the main work streams of the Finance, Law and Performance Directorate.

Councillor Turner asked if there would be any penalties imposed on the Council if it failed to meet the requirements of the Gershon efficiency agenda. Vicky

Crowshaw replied that there was no clear guidance on the matter, although the efficiency agenda was a major contributor to the new CPA 2005 methodology within the Use of Resources theme and failure to meet the Gershon agenda would affect the Council's overall CPA rating.

Councillor Chambers asked for further information regarding the newly announced Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Local Strategic Partnership Agreement (LPSA). Rob Flinter gave a brief overview of the two agreements focusing on the benefits to the Council as a whole. Helen Dudson suggested that a time-line of significant events within the implementation could be presented at the next meeting in September. Councillor Chambers asked if a briefing note could be provided giving further details on the geographical area of the agreements. Rob Flinter agreed that he would produce a briefing note to be circulated before the next meeting of the Panel.

Members asked about the new CPA methodology. Rob Flinter said that the Government had issued a document entitled 'CPA – The Harder Test' which was due for presentation to Cabinet on 13 July following which, both Members and officers would receive briefings. Rob Flinter further stated that the Use of Resources element had fundamentally changed with an added emphasis on Value for Money in the new methodology.

Councillor Sanders thanked the officers for their input and asks the Members to discuss and decide on the possible work streams for the year.

During open discussions, the Members agreed that Budget Consultation, CPA use of resources and LAA / LPSA were the areas of most interest and highest impact on the Council. Councillor Sanders also stated that the Beacon Index and Putting the Citizen First could also form part of the work stream later in the municipal year, if time and resource allowed.

Helen Dudson said that, as the Panel had been very focused in preliminary scoping of the work programme, no further scoping was necessary but that it was important that all were clear about the purpose and focus of the scrutiny to be undertaken. As the Panel had previously been involved in budget consultation, its' purpose and focus was clear. The following was agreed

- a. That scrutiny of CPA Use of Resources would, following an overview of the subject, initially focus on the Value for Money element, as this would include examination of efficiency savings and benchmarking.
- b. That, following the briefing note regarding the LAA/LPSA, scrutiny would focus on performance management arrangements of the agreements.

The Panel then moved on to consider which scrutiny technique best suited the areas identified. Following discussions the Panel agreed that Budget Consultations would be undertaken by the full Panel and that 2 working groups would be established; one to scrutinise CPA use of resources and one to scrutinise LAA / LPSA agreements.

The working group memberships were decided as follows:

CPA use of resources working group

Councillors Shires, Micklewright, Rochelle, Griffiths and Sarohi

LAA / LPSA working group

Councillors Young, Chambers and Turner

It was agreed that a meeting of both working groups would be arranged before the next Panel in order to define their remits.

Further to the discussion it was agreed that the Panel, at its next meeting in September, would like to receive an update on the medium term and five year financial plan along with a report on the Beacon Index. They also suggested that Councillor Longhi, as the Portfolio holder with responsibility for performance, may be invited to meet the Panel.

Resolved

- That Rob Flinter would produce a briefing note on LAAs and LPSAs to be circulated before the next meeting of the Panel.
- That the Budget Consultation, CPA use of resources, and in particular the VFM element, and LAA / LPSA were the areas of most interest and highest impact on the Council.
- That the Beacon Index and Putting the Citizen First would form part of the work stream later in the municipal year, if time and resources allowed.
- That the Budget Consultation would be considered by the full Panel.
- That working groups be constituted to consider CPA use of resources and LAAs / LPSAs
- That a meeting of both working groups would be arranged before the next Panel in order to define their remits.

8 FORWARD PLAN

Councillor Sanders asked the Panel to note the circulated plan and to receive the updated plan (20 June 2005). He then asked that if Members wished to raise any items from the forward plan, they should contact either the Chair or Vice Chair, before the next agenda meeting, in order that the item could be considered.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7:21 p.m.