# REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Monday 19 January 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present Councillor D. Pitt (Chair)

Councillor S. Coughlan (Vice-Chair)

Councillor D. Anson

Councillor B. Douglas-Maul Councillor B. Tweddle Councillor I. Shires Councillor K. Sears Councillor A. Underhill

**Portfolio holders present** Councillor A. Andrew – Regeneration

Officers present Tim Johnson – Executive Director – Regeneration

Stuart Wootton - Finance Manager - Regeneration &

**Neighbourhood Services** 

Craig Goodall - Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

#### 65/08 APOLOGIES

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

### 66/08 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

## 67/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

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

# 68/08 REGENERATION DIRECTORATE 3RD QUARTER 2008/09 BUDGET MONITORING

The Panel received a report on the budget outturn figures at the end of the third quarter 2008/09 for the Regeneration Directorate at Walsall Council.

Stuart Wootton informed Members that the services within the remit of the Panel were currently showing an overspend on £1,460,135 after the use of earmarked reserves. However once other services that were managed by the directorate were added that were not part of the Panel's remit the overspend reduced to £1,175,557. He outlined the forecast revenue outturn in table 1, the forecast variance in table 2, the capital programme outturn and variances as highlighted in table 3 and 4 respectively and summarised external funding as detailed in table 5.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- Strategic Regeneration was not overspent due to the allocation of earmarked reserves.
- Planning and Land Charges overspends were recorded due to an under recovery of income.

- Tim Johnson agreed to provide the Panel with further information on variances listed in table 4.
- Councillor Andrew explained that the St Matthews Quarter development was still intended to go ahead and even if the market had relocated as planned no building work would have commenced during 2009.

#### Resolved:

That Tim Johnson provide a briefing note to Members providing further details on variances within the capital programme.

# 69/08 REGENERATION DIRECTORATE DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/10 - 2011/12

Members considered the draft budget proposals for Walsall Councils Regeneration Directorate for 2009/10 – 2011/12.

Tim Johnson took the Panel through the financing cost investment bids, which were all linked to correcting income generation targets which had been affected due the current change in economic circumstances. He also explained the new investment bids; efficiencies and savings; fees and charges; and capital bids.

Members were concerned about the deletion of two principal planning officer posts in the enforcement and householder team (efficiency/saving 116) particularly when there was a national shortage of planning officers. Tim Johnson explained that these posts had been offered as savings due the current downturn in planning applications. Members noted that the current enforcement team was already stretched and suggested that it difficult economic conditions more enforcement officers were required as developers may potentially be tempted to cut corners to save costs. The Panel suggested that instead of making these posts redundant the option should be given for voluntary reduced hours so that skilled staff could be retained in this important area until such time that planning applications increased once more. On reflection Members felt that this should be the approach taken across the Council when posts were being considered for redundancy.

When considering the capital bids Tim Johnson informed the Panel that due to financial circumstances a reduced programme was being proposed. In response to a question on a capital bid for redhouse community centre Councillor Andrew reported that the Council's financial contribution had been met through a section 106 agreement.

The Panel suggested that the Council should engage in capacity building in the third sector to enable them to support themselves. Councillor Andrew noted that groups such as Walsall Voluntary Action received lottery grants to carry out this activity.

Councillor	Shires	asked	for it	be	recorded	that	he	abstained	from	voting	on	the	<b>Panels</b>
recommen	dations	<b>.</b>											

recommendations.			
Resolved:			

### That:

	between existing employees to avoid the deletion of two principal planning officers as proposed in saving 116;
	and;
2.	consideration be given to voluntary reduced hours, job share or retraining schemes for all posts at risk of deletion or redundancy across the Council to retain skills within the workforce.
70	/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING
Th	e date of the next meeting was noted as 12 March 2009.
Th	e meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.
Ch	nair:
Da	ate:

1. consideration be given to a voluntary reduced hours proposal or job share