

## **REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Wednesday 2 December 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

### **Panel Members present**

Councillor D. Pitt (Chair)  
Councillor D. Anson  
Councillor S. Coughlan  
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul  
Councillor L. Harrison  
Councillor K. Sears  
Councillor I. Shires

### **Portfolio Holders present**

Councillor A. Andrew – Regeneration  
Councillor C. Towe – Finance and Personnel

### **Officers present**

Tim Johnson	Executive Director – Regeneration
Mike Tichford	Assistant Director – Regeneration
Stuart Wootton	Finance Planning Manager
Chris Knowles	Lead Accountant
Craig Goodall	Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

### **38/09 APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **39/09 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **40/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest for the duration of the meeting.

### **41/09 MINUTES**

Craig Goodall reported that there had been an alteration to the draft minutes contained in the agenda papers. The changes included: the correction of the date of the meeting and an officers name. The minutes signed by the Chair had been amended to reflect this change.

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes, as amended, of the meeting held on 3 November 2009, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.**

(annexed)

### **42/09 REVENUE AND CAPITAL MONITORING – 2009/10 SECOND QUARTER FORECAST**

Members were informed of the predicated revenue and capital outturn position for 2009/10 based on the performance for quarter two (April to September 2009) for services within the remit of the Panel.

Stuart Wootton explained that the Regeneration Directorate was showing a predicted revenue overspend of £961,248 which reduced to £512,876 following agreed corporate wide financial actions. There was also a forecast capital underspend of £342,935.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- The overspend in estates management was due to loss of rental income after tenants had vacated premises. It was proposed that this rental shortfall would be covered by central resources in the 2010/11 budget.
- The £298,000 shortfall in fee income in Building Services was caused by a lag in delivering work and recovering fees. Work was underway to improve the speed at which costs were recovered.
- It was explained that capital investment at Willenhall Leisure Centre had been required to ensure it meets with public safety requirements.
- The £1,147,000 capital budget for 'Red Routes' was an external government grant.

#### **43/09 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2010/11 FOR REGENERATION PORTFOLIO**

Members considered the portfolio plan and draft budget proposals for 2010/11 from the Cabinet Portfolio for Regeneration.

The Chair invited Councillor Andrew to present his portfolio plan and priorities and budget proposals to the Panel.

##### *Portfolio Plan and Priorities*

Councillor Andrew explained that his portfolio was predominately focussed on the economic development of the local area. He highlighted that Walsall had been praised for its approach to allocating Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF). The Panel review the priorities as set out in the report and were supportive of them.

##### *Budget – Proposed Growth Areas 2010/11*

Councillor Andrew explained that the majority of growth bids focussed in Property Services. These bids were necessary, in the main, to deal with health and safety issues and to cover loss of income.

In response to a question Councillor Andrew explained that a risk assessment regarding an empty Willenhall Leisure Centre would be completed if the proposed decision was agreed by Council. The Panel were also advised that the Suffolk Place depot will be reviewed now it was vacant. Sale was one option for the site.

##### *Budget – Full Year Effect 2009/10*

The Panel queried the impact of the deletion of two principal planning officer posts as approved for the 2009/10 budget. Mike Tichford clarified that the deletion of posts was

not intended to create a reduction in capacity, moreover, it was a reorganisation of two existing teams into one unit. This restructure was in the process of being implemented.

#### *Budget – Proposed Efficiencies 2010/11*

##### **144 – Service Redesign – Rationalise the provision of category two School Crossing Patrols (through vacant posts)**

Councillor Andrew explained that category two school crossing patrols were discretionary positions as alternative unsupervised crossing facilities already existed in the area. A number of the posts had been vacant for three years. Tim Johnson reassured Members that school crossings were kept under constant review and crossings could be reclassified.

##### **125 – Efficiency – Reduction in town centre management/shopmobility**

Members were informed that this efficiency was being made in the town centre management side of the service. The shopmobility service would not be affected by this efficiency.

A Member noted that they were happy to see efficiencies in services coming forward but emphasised the need of ensuring that the efficiencies were actually delivered.

A number of Members expressed disappointment with the proposed decision to close Willenhall Leisure Centre and the potential impact that this would have on the regeneration plan for the town. It was felt that the closure of the centre would also make it difficult to achieve the priorities set out in the portfolio plan. The proposal was further disappointing in the light of increased footfall and council investment at the centre.

Councillor Andrew reported that the motivation for the leisure centre closure was not to allow a business an opportunity to relocate to Willenhall following a question from a Member of the Panel. Councillor Andrew also confirmed that a site for Pool Hayes school had not been decided.

*Councillor Ian Shires abstained from the voting.*

#### **RESOLVED:**

##### **That:**

##### **1. the Regeneration Portfolio plans and priorities be supported;**

**and;**

##### **2. the draft Regeneration Portfolio growth, efficiency, new income and service redesign budget proposals for 2010/11 be noted.**

#### **44/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members noted the date of the next meeting as 6 January 2010.

*The meeting terminated at 6.45 p.m.*

Chair:

Date: