

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel
DATE: 17 December 2008

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANELS

Purpose

To inform Members of the considerations of all scrutiny and performance panels on the budget options for 2008/09.

Report

Four of Walsall Council's Scrutiny and Performance Panels (SPP) have met during the last two weeks to consider budget proposals to Cabinet following receipt of resource planning documents earlier in the year which identified service priorities and current spending.

The findings of four SPP's are listed below.

The findings of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel meeting scheduled to take place on 11 December 2008 will be reported in due course.

Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel

The Health, Social Care and Inclusion SPP met on 24 November 2008 and made the following recommendations:

That the following recommendations be reported to the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel and Cabinet for inclusion in the Social Care and Inclusion Directorate budget for 2009/10:

1. further retendering of commissioned services is investigated with a view to making efficiencies whilst maintaining value for money;
2. further efficiencies be identified through pooled budgets including the joint appointment to posts with other health care providers;
3. further investment into assistive technology be sought to support discharges from hospital in conjunction with the Manor Hospital and NHS Walsall;
4. continued investment in aids and adaptations to support vulnerable people in their own homes;
5. further investment in the voluntary and community sector to increase its health care capacity with a view to longer term savings;
6. an early commitment be made for any cashable efficiencies realised in the social care and inclusion directorate and central support services through more efficient processes

created by the implementation of the personalisation agenda be redirected into adult's social care.

and;

7. information regarding the levels of contributions from Walsall Council to fund social care activities in the voluntary and community sector be provided to the January 2009 meeting of the Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel

The Regeneration SPP met on 3 December 2008 and made the following recommendations:

That:

1. the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance support the Council wide recruitment suspension to all posts except for those which are vitally important;
2. all Council communication material such as: Walsall Pride, Team Spirit and A-Z Services, should be maintained to ensure as much information as possible is available to local people to access services;
3. realistic and achievable budgets for service areas are set;
4. a full decision conferencing style event is held for the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel with Regeneration and Finance Officers to enable a full and detailed discussion of the budget for 2010/11;

and;

5. Councillor Des Pitt to present the Panels recommendations to the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 12 December 2008.

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel

The Neighbourhoods SPP met on 4 December 2008 and made the following the recommendations:

That Cabinet consider the following resolutions from Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel:

Budget

1. investigations be undertaken to identify opportunities where the numbers of volunteers and other third sector input could be employed by the Libraries and Heritage Service;
2. ensure that income generation possibilities are maximised at Darlaston Town Hall;
3. negotiations be undertaken to secure increased financial contributions from partners towards community safety priorities;

4. further opportunities for pooled budgets with partners should be sought at all levels with particular reference to community safety activity;
5. further opportunities for joint appointments with partners should be sought at all levels with particular reference to community safety activity;
6. the possibility of sponsorship for the First Stop Bus should be investigated;
7. there be no extension of current car parking charges;
8. assistance be provided to voluntary and community safety organisations with external funding bids associated with the boroughs parks;
9. investigations be undertaken to establish the possibilities of the Councils crematorium being operated by the private sector;
10. investigations be undertaken to establish potential and cheaper alternative facilities to the Bryntisilio centre;
11. consideration be given to delivering Streetpride services through the private sector;

Information

12. Tim Challans to advise the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel of the numbers of staff employed by the libraries service and their roles within the service;
13. Library usage figures be provided to the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel to identify low use centres with the view to rationalising the local network to make future savings whilst still meeting national library standards;
14. Councillor Tweddle be advised of any costs incurred by the Council to fund dog training classes;
15. Tim Challans to advise the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel of the contractors cost to switch on Christmas lights in Walsall and its district centres;
16. the cost of providing marked electoral registers to Members be provided to the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel;
17. investigations be undertaken to establish the cost of modifying car parks machines to include functionality to print car registration numbers on tickets;
18. Steve Pretty to write to all Members of the Council to ask them to identify problem drains in their wards which are constantly flooding;
19. the number of prosecutions made under public protection legislation be reported to the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel;
20. the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel be informed of the number of deaths and cremations in the borough per year;

21. financial benchmarking data be provided to the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel on costs for:

- a. grass cutting/grounds maintenance
- b. Street cleaning
- c. Litter picking

22. the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel be provided with the full costs of resourcing Local Neighbourhood Partnerships and their sub-groups;

Other

23. no decision be taken by Cabinet on the establishment of Community Action Teams until the issue has been considered by the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny and Performance Panel

The Children and Young Peoples SPP met on 5 December 2008 and made the following recommendations:

Recommendations

That cabinet consider the following resolutions from the Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel:

That:

- a) Further reductions in the number of social workers is not feasible and there is the need to protect the service area and recognise the potential requirement for an increase in expenditure within this service;
- b) In light of recent events in Haringey and Kirklees, the Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel strongly urge Cabinet that commitment to Child Protection and safeguarding is at the core of Council policy. The Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel acknowledge the excellent work of the social workers and recognises that there is no greater or more vital challenge than the safeguarding of children in this borough. Accordingly, it is recommended that this service must not be subject to any reduction in its budget. Furthermore, Cabinet should be mindful that further budgetary increase might be necessary;
- c) The Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel recognise the importance the provision of positive activities for young people has on the social wellbeing of our communities. The Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend that every effort is made to continue to provide the range of services that have historically been provided through Area Based Grants;
- d) The Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel asks Cabinet that funds should be maintained and if possible increased for preventative services to ensure early intervention is achieved;

and;

- e) Councillor E Hughes will attend the meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Decision Conferencing event on 17 December 2008

Recommendations

That the Panel consider the recommendations of the scrutiny and performance panels and take into account the views expressed in their consideration of the Walsall Council Corporate Budget for 2009/10.

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