

Special Regeneration 21/1/05

Present

Councillor I Shires
Councillor Yasin
Councillor Coughlan
Councillor Robinson
Councillor Turner
Councillor Tweddle

Portfolio Holders

Councillor Andrews
Councillor Longhi
Councillor O'Hare
Councillor Ansell

76. Changes in Membership

Delete: Councillor Aslam
Substitute: Councillor Turner

77. Apologies

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Johnson

78. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

79. Draft Capital Revenue Budget 2005/6 - 2007/8 Draft Capital Programme 2005/6 - 2007/8

The reports of the Executive Director were submitted:-
(see annexed)

Councillor Shires referred to the reports which had been previously circulated and advised Panel that the reports would be briefly outlined in a presentation by Vicky Crowshaw and that there would be a period of discussion where questions and comments would be considered.

Vicky Crowshaw gave a presentation. Members were invited to ask questions and ask for points of clarification.

Councillor Robinson referred to appendix 1 to the draft Capital Revenue Budget he asked for further detail about Neighborhood / Programme Management. Sonia Davidson-Grant advised that this related to Julie Ball and Peter Francis team and would be paying for the central function of the Local Neighborhood Partnerships (LNPs), support team and other related functions.

Councillor Robinson referred to appendix 1 to the draft Capital Revenue Budget he asked for further detail about Community Engagement LNPs. Sonia Davidson-Grant advised that the £250,000 overspend was money set aside to deal with any work to come out of the Local Neighborhood plans.

Councillor Robinson asked if the money would be equally split between LNPs. Sonia Davidson-Grant said that there was no split at this time and explained that it would depend on what comes out of the Local Neighborhood plans. Councillor Shires added that each of the LNPs plans were at different stages of development and at this time it was not possible to determine now but acknowledged that the resource required would depend on the work identified by the plan.

Councillor Robinson referred to appendix 8a (E) Disposal of Tyres and asked how tyres are currently disposed of. Sonia Davidson-Grant advised that the anticipated increase in disposal costs associated with tyre is due to a change in legislation. She explained that the cost was not due to a different way of disposing of tyres but that they were specific costs associated with disposal of them. Councillor Ansell said at the moment tyres are disposed of free of charge and that the legislation bans the disposal at landfill sites from 2006/7. Councillor Longhi added that the legislative change will cost the Council more money to dispose of tyres.

Councillor Robinson referred to appendix 8a (A) Increase in Landfill Tax and asked for further detail. Sonia Davidson-Grant advised that the incremental increases were based on assumptions that more rubbish is being sent to the tip. She explained that the recycling initiatives were being implemented to address this issue and that the roll out of kerb side recycling boxes should reduce the amount of waste being sent to the landfill sites.

There were no more items raised for discussion relating to the draft corporate revenue budget and capital programme reports from cabinet 19 January 2005.

80. Resolved

That the reports be agreed.

81. Regeneration Housing and the Built Environment - Draft Revenue Budget 2005/6 - 2009/10

The report of the Executive Director was submitted:-
(see annexed)

Paul Simpson was in attendance at the meeting to give a presentation and answer members questions.

Councillor Coughlan referred to appendix 3 Retained Housing and asked for further detail. He was advised that the retained housing and private sector team would cover developing and delivering housing strategy through to managing and monitoring; also private sector renewal grants, rights of tenants etc.

Councillor Coughlan referred to appendix 1a (E) the disposal of tyres as previously highlighted.

Councillor Coughlan referred to appendix 1B (17) Cemeteries - shortfall of income. Paul Simpson explained that there had been an underachievement of the target figure. Members were advised that the need to set realistic budgets

and performance manage teams had been identified by a new manager and that the recent development of a cost structure to increase income meant that it was likely that accelerated income was going to be achieved.

Councillor Shires asked whether increased costs would mean Walsall citizens seeking more competitive costs in neighboring authorities, he suggested that local people would want to be buried locally. Sonia Davidson-Grant confirmed that benchmarking had been carried out with neighboring authorities and costs were comparable, she advised members that an excellent piece of work had been carried out by officers. Councillor Longhi agreed that excellent work had been undertaken in bereavement services and that services had been realigned. Councillor Shires welcomed the adjustments to the service and said that the scrutiny panel may wish to include cemeteries in next years scrutiny work programme.

Councillor Coughlan referred to appendix 1B (19) Loss of income from car parks and future lack of car parks, specifically Clemson Street, Willenhall. Members voiced concerns about the loss of the car parks but recognized the inward investment and the impact on the vitality and viability of the Town centre and the Borough as a whole from the Shannons Mill development and the Town Centre Transport Package. Councillor Longhi said that fewer car parks equal less income generated. He indicated that there was vacant land on which to build in the centers however car parking space was scarce.

Councillor Shires referred to the regeneration working groups recent discussions about movement, car parking and park and ride issues, and suggested picking this issue up at the next working group. Tim Johnson advised that master planning addresses car park strategy, transport strategy and transport ambitions. Councillor Coughlan referred to a recent issue in Willenhall District centre, Clemson Street, and said this was an opportunity to open up routes and plan ahead. He suggested LNPs could consider the issues and include something in the Local Neighborhood Plans.

Councillor Coughlan welcomed the post of Energy Efficiency Officer.

Councillor Shires referred to appendix 2 (9) Review of Public Conveniences provision. In response to questions he was advised that all sites would be retained as non attendants sites, with the exception of the bus station, and that all opening and closing times would have to be reviewed.

Councillor Shires referred to appendix 2 CCTV / Community Safety. Councillor Shires recognized that the NRF funding is expected to fall out in March 2006, however felt that the issues around community safety wardens, anti social behavior should warrant 'bending the mainstream' to enhance provision of CCTV / community safety wardens in deprivation 'hotspots'. He said this affects people in a big way and asked if there were ways of creating the saving elsewhere and using this money to enhance the service.

A discussion followed and the following key points recorded:-

- Councillor Robinson agreed with investing in Community Safety and suggested the purchase of specialist cameras to capture anti social behaviour would have a great impact on community safety.
- Councillor Tweddle felt that Police should fund specialist camera equipment.

- Councillor Shires explained that Police had not got the funding and that the provision of equipment would reduce crime and take the pressure off the police.
- Councillor Yasin cautioned that specialist equipment can become obsolete quite quickly.
- Councillor Shires suggested urging Cabinet to extend the NRF funding beyond March 2006.

The following points were prioritized:-

- That £100,000 saving for CCTV / Community safety wardens remain with in the budget for Regeneration Housing and Built Environment for 2005/6 ;
- That Cabinet be requested to pursue extending NRF funding via the Community safety commission beyond March 2006;
- That Officers investigate ways of making savings elsewhere within the directorate;
- That officers specifically consider investing in mobile high technology surveillance equipment.

Members concluded discussion of the budget consultation documents. Councillor Coughlan was pleased to be advised that housing renovation grants were being spent on housing renovation. Councillor Robinson welcomed the high prioritization of Community Safety.

The following resolution was moved by Councillor Shires, seconded by Councillor Yasin, and upon being put to the vote carried unanimously:-

82. Resolved

1. That the Regeneration Environment Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend to Cabinet that ;

1. The £100,000 saving for CCTV / Community safety, contained within the draft corporate budget, remain with in the budget for Regeneration Housing and Built Environment for 2005/6 onwards,
2. Cabinet be requested to pursue extending NRF funding beyond March 2006,
3. Officers investigate ways of making alternative savings elsewhere within the directorate,
4. Officers specifically consider investing in community safety wardens / mobile high technology surveillance equipment, in hotspots of deprivation within wards that previously did not qualify for such funding.
5. Cabinet seeks to make community safety a higher priority within the budget
6. Subject to 1 to 5 above, the Regeneration Environment Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel agree the draft budget 2005/6 – 2009/10

83. Termination of meeting

6.15pm