

## **CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Thursday, 21 June, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. in a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

**Panel Members Present** Councillor S. Coughlan (Chair)  
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker  
Councillor J. Rochelle  
Councillor D. Shires  
Councillor D. Turner  
Councillor R. Worrall  
Councillor E. Hughes (substitute for Councillor M. Flower)

**Portfolio holders present** Councillor Chris Towe - Finance and personnel

**Officers Present** Rory Borealis - Executive Director, Resources  
Paul Gordon – Head of Business Change  
Carol Williams – Head of Programme Delivery  
Paul Milmore – Head of Business Solutions  
Martin Sadler – Head of Shared Services and Procurement  
Neil Picken - Senior Democratic Services Officer

### **136/12 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were received on behalf of Councillor M. Flower.

### **137/12 SUBSTITUTIONS**

Councillor Hughes substitute for Councillor Flower.

### **138/12 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

None received.

### **139/12 MINUTES**

#### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 April, 2012, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

## 140/12 KEY ISSUES FOR 2012/13 AND FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Director (Resources), together with senior managers, provided a presentation on key issues relevant to the remit of the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel for the forthcoming year. A further paper was circulated which gave details of each Head of Service, together with contact details.

Members considered suggested themes which were:-

- Help me with my money, my home, my job;
  - Welfare Reform Programme
- Help my business grow and be successful;
  - Local Value Act
- Medium term financial strategy 2014 onwards.

There then followed a discussion by Members in relation to the welfare reform programme, specifically relating to the introduction of a universal credit to replace the current range of means tested benefits, including Housing Benefit from 2013. A query was raised as to how changes in circumstances would be tracked and adjustments made as and when necessary. Officers advised that it was anticipated the system would be 'live' and constantly react to changes in circumstance although many IT aspects were still to be resolved.

With regard to the Local Value Act it was explained that there may be opportunity to award more work to local companies so long as some added value would benefit the local community as a result. Services were being redesigned to deal with typical customer demand focussing on attracting investment into Walsall.

In relation to the budget, it was asked why six new agency staff had been appointed to work within housing benefits at a time when existing staff had been denied the option of working on Saturdays. It was understood that agency staff had been used from as far as Manchester. In response, it was stated that an issue arose which required resolving quickly. Agency staff had been appointed for a short period to assist. The portfolio holder for finance and personnel advised that he would investigate this matter further and respond to the Chair.

Members enquired as to which services had been deleted from the budget and requested that a list be circulated to Members of the Panel. The portfolio holder for finance and personnel agreed to investigate this matter but, in doing so, highlighted that the budget process had been open and transparent with Scrutiny Panels being afforded the opportunity to comment.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the presentation be noted;
- (2) That the Chair of Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel be contacted to establish whether or not they wished to undertake a joint piece of work with three Members from each Panel to look at 'Help my business grow and be successful';

(3) That the following key issues be considered during 2012/13:-

- Help me with my money, my home, my job;
  - Welfare Reform Programme
- Help my business grow and be successful;
  - Local Value Act
- Medium term financial strategy 2014 onwards
- Elections

(4) That the portfolio holder for finance and personnel provide a response to the chair in relation to:-

- The use of agency staff within the benefits service and
- Services which had been deleted from the budget.

**14/12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would take place on 19 July, 2012.

There being no further business, the meeting terminated at 6.50 p.m.

Signed:

Date:

