

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

**Wednesday 14 November, 2012 at 6.00 pm in a Conference Room at the
Council House**

Panel Members Present: Councillor V. Woodruff (Chair)
Councillor C. Creaney (Vice-Chair)
Councillor I. Azam
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor K. Hussain
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker
Councillor L. Rattigan

Officers in Attendance: Jamie Morris – Executive Director
(Neighbourhoods)
Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhoods)
Chris Holiday - Head of Leisure and Community
Health
Steve Pretty – Head of Engineering &
Transportation
Tracey Evans – Lead Accountant
Dave Roberts – Streetpride Operations Service
Manager
Craig Goodall - Scrutiny Officer

36/12 Apologies

There were no apologies of absence for the duration of the meeting.

37/12 Substitutions

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

38/12 Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

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

39/12 Minutes

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2012, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

40/12 Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Position for 2012/13

Members considered the predicted revenue and capital position for 2012/13, based on the performance for quarter 2 (to end of September 2012), for services within the remit of the Panel.

The Lead Accountant reported that, for services within the remit of the Panel, a net revenue overspent of £735,000 after the use of approved reserves and carry forwards. She highlighted the main variances and potential further risks to Members as featured in Appendix 1 and 2 to the report.

The capital programme was forecast to under spend by £5,689,000. This under spend would in the main be requested as carry forward into 2013/14.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) reported that the under recovery of car park income was severely affecting the budget forecast. In addition to this problems with contaminated recycling were creating further pressures.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion following questions from Members:

- There was £174,000 less income as utility works were being carried out on schedule. The Local Authority had the power to fine utility providers for over running works.
- Further information was requested on the use of agency staff in the First Stop Shop.
- Contamination levels with recycling loads had increased from 8% to 16%. The new recycling contract allowed for 5% contamination. The contractor was very stringent regarding contamination levels. Contaminated loads had to be land filled at an additional cost. Work was being undertaken to target areas where contamination levels had increased. Refuse workers were set to be instructed not to empty bins if they noticed they were contaminated. Members were supportive over an educational approach being taken without the need for strong enforcement actions such as fines.
- An £18,000 overspend in the Engineering Core Support Team related to potential redundancy costs at the West Midlands Core Support team .
- There was a medium term risk that expenditure would need to increase on local authority funded funerals.

Resolved:

That:

- 1. a further report on recycling and contamination be presented to the next meeting of the Panel;**

and;

- 2. Members be advised of the reasons for the use of agency staff in the First Stop Shop.**

41/12 Draft Revenue Budget 2013/14 for Leisure and Culture, Public Protection, Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector and Transport and Environment Portfolios

The Panel considered the draft 2013/14 budgets, portfolio plans for service delivery, along with the approach being taken to delivering service improvements and cost efficiency for the Leisure and Culture, Public Protection, Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector and Transport and Environment Portfolios.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) introduced the report explaining that all services were benchmarking costs with the intention of becoming the lowest spending. He highlighted that £4m of savings were proposed this year. Consultation on the proposals so far had been encouraging and would continue to take place.

The Portfolio Holder (Public Protection) highlighted the savings taking place in his portfolio. He also explained that work was taking place to implement an integrated approach to tackling anti-social behaviour with community safety partners. In addition to this work was continuing to take place to develop a regional trading standards service. Work was also taking place to implement the recommendations made by the Litter Working Group.

The Portfolio Holder (Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector) explained that it was proposed to 'top up' area managers budgets each year up to £40,000. He added that he was looking to build capacity in the local third sector. Work was also taking place to investigate the possibility of devolving budgets.

Following a question from a Member of the Panel it was agreed to establish if there were any compatibility problems with e-books loaned from Walsall libraries.

Resolved

That:

- 1. The 2013/14 draft revenue budgets for Leisure and Culture, Public Protection, Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector and Transport and Environment Portfolios be noted;**

and;

- 2. Further information be provided to Members on the compatibility of e-books loaned from Walsall libraries.**

42/12 School Catering Working Group

The Panel considered the final report and recommendations of the School Catering Working Group.

The Working Group Lead Member, Councillor Illmann-Walker, presented the report to the Panel. He highlighted the inequalities in the borough and the need to challenge them. He explained that the working group had found evidence to suggest that school meals could have an impact on improving long term health, educational attainment and social skills. The working group had considered approaches taken by other countries around the world.

Members of the Panel were supportive of the recommendations and the need to try a different approach to tackle the boroughs inequalities. It was acknowledged that significant investment was required to implement the working group's aspirations of a universal free school meal service for all primary school children but that this money would be spent for the long term benefit of local people.

The Panel reviewed the working group recommendations and made some minor alterations.

Resolved

- 1. School meals should meet the School Foods Trust standards for nutrition.**
- 2. Where schools wish to do so children should eat school meals at a table from a plate with a knife and fork;**
- 3. School staff, health staff and other professionals should work together to identify hungry and malnourished children and ensure that they receive a school meal;**
- 4. School meals should be produced in the locality of the school where they are served;**
- 5. Take up of free school meals in Walsall should be increased to best in class of similar councils – from 81.9% to 88.25 (Tameside);**
- 6. Take up of paid school meals should increase substantially;**
- 7. In the interests of improving long term health and educational attainment school meals should preferably be provided free of charge to all primary school children. If it is not possible to provide them free of charge then the maximum charge for a school meal for primary school children should be £1;**
- 8. strong consideration across the public sector should be given to subsidising school meals as a long term preventative measure against poor health;**

9. The 'Food Dudes' programme should continue in all primary and secondary schools;
10. The Councils School Catering Service should continue as a traded service as part of the councils commitment to investing in the attainment and well-being of children. However, it cannot continue in its current form. Therefore the School Catering Service should:
 - a. become more customer focussed in terms of meeting the needs of parents, schools and children;
 - b. use more fresh produce;
 - c. become more efficient;
 - d. invest in modern back-office systems;
 - e. Take part in a working smarter review.
 - f. Continual training and updating of skills for cooks.
11. Corporate Support Service Recharges for the School Catering Service should be reviewed;
12. The Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel should undertake an investigation into Corporate Support Service Recharges. Including considering alternative processes;
13. The School Catering Service should be managed as part of Public Health, once they transfer to the council, not Leisure;
14. A copy of the working groups report be sent to all Members of the Children's and Young Peoples and Health Scrutiny and Performance Panels.

42/12 Work Programme 2012/13 and Forward Plan

Resolved:

That:

1. the forward plan be noted;
and;
2. the following items be considered at the next meeting of the Panel:
 - a. Sports and Leisure Strategy;
 - b. Recycling;
 - c. Revenue and Capital Budget 2013/14.

43/12 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting would take place at 6.00pm on 3 January 2012.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm

Chair:

Date: