

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Monday, 28 November, 2011 at 6.00 p.m in a Conference Room at the Council House, Lichfield Street, Walsall.

Panel Members Present

Councillor R. Carpenter (Chair)
Councillor C. Creaney
Councillor S. Fitzpatrick
Councillor G. Illmann-Walker
Councillor M. Munir
Councillor J. Murray

Portfolio Holder present

Councillor T. Ansell - Transport and Environment

Officers Present

Jamie Morris - Executive Director, Neighbourhood Services
Steve Pretty - Engineering and Transportation
Steph Simcox - Service Accountant and Financial Training Manager
Neil Picken - Senior Constitutional Services Officer

110/11 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were received on behalf of Councillors Westley, Douglas-Maul and Woodruff.

111/11 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

112/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip.

113/11 MINUTES

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October, 2011, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

114/11 BUDGET CONSULTATION FEEDBACK 2012/13

Members received a report, as submitted to Cabinet at its meeting held on 9th November, 2011, in relation to budget consultation feedback 2012/13.

Members were advised of the outcome of the budget consultation which gathered the views of local residents, the community and voluntary sector, children and young people, older people, representatives from the business community and others.

Members noted that the results from the budget simulator indicated that a priority spending area was leisure, sport and recreation. Respondents also increased spending for roads and maintenance and public safety. Respondents reduced spending in all other areas with the greatest reduction in benefits, housing, planning and building control and libraries and heritage.

Members noted that businesses in the community and voluntary sector supported proposals for investment in job creation and agreed that investing in children and young people and developing and retaining talent within the Borough was paramount. It was established that many would be keen to sign up apprentices.

Other areas included developing the local economy, reducing unemployment and increasing employment prospects which was a key priority for many and a common concern. Ensuring a vibrant, clean town and district centres was deemed important for raising pride in the local area and car parking charges was an issue for both residents and businesses.

There then followed a period of questioning by Members. It was asked whether figures were available detailing the number of fines issued for littering. In response, it was stated that it was by no means a large figure as it was not frequently enforced.

The Assistant Director for Neighbourhood Services reported that Members had within their work programme scope to establish a Littering Working Group. It was suggested that, should a Working Group be established this issue could be considered in more depth.

Members further suggested that Walsall could adopt a similar process to that of Sandwell whereby mini head cams were worn by Enforcement Officers. It was agreed that this matter should also be considered by the Working group, if established.

There then followed a discussion on the use of the budget simulation tool. Members were advised that only 250 people used the tool, despite the deadline being extended. Officers stressed that the budget simulator was only part of consultation process used for the budget and a variety of meetings were undertaken with many groups. When asked whether a breakdown was available, Officers undertook to provide the information after the meeting.

In closing, a question was raised as to whether it was feasible to send out a questionnaire to all residents to get their views on the draft budget. In response, Officers advised that it was feasible and would be investigated further in future years.

Having considered the report it was:-

Resolved

- 1) That the report, as submitted to Cabinet on 9 November, 2011, detailing Budget Consultation Feedback, be noted**
- 2) That should a Littering Working Group be established, the issue of enforcement and possible use of Head Cameras be investigated in more depth.**

115/11 SECOND DRAFT REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2012/13 FOR CONSULTATION

Members received a report outlining:-

- Changes to the first draft budget as reported to Cabinet on 14th September, 2011, including the effect of the recently announced Council Tax freeze grant for 2012/13.
- Details on those saving proposals which required an executive decision to implement.

Members were advised that there were no policy changes under the remit of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

The Assistant Director of Neighbourhood Services advised Members of the changes to the proposed revenue savings options 2012/13 in relation to transport and environment.

There being no further discussion it was:-

Resolved

That the report, as submitted to Cabinet on 9 November, 2011, detailing the second draft Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals 2012/12, be noted.

116/11 QUARTER 2 FINANCIAL MONITORING POSITION FOR 2011/12

Members received a report summarising the predicted revenue and capital position for 2011/12 based on the performance for Quarter 2 (1 April to 30 September, 2011) for services within the remit of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel.

Members were advised that there was a projected overspend of £200k. This was due to the income generated from car parking charges being lower than anticipated. Officers gave assurances that they would be working hard to mitigate this before March to ensure that there was no longer a deficit at the end of the financial year.

Members considered the report and:-

Resolved

That the report be noted.

117/11 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

Members considered the Work Programme and Forward Plan. During deliberation and further to discussion raised in Minute 114/1, it was suggested that the feasibility of establishing a Littering Working Group be investigated. The Clerk suggested that Members nominate themselves to sit on an informal Group to carry out a scoping exercise to investigate areas for consideration. This group would report to the next meeting with a view to establishing a formal Working Group. The following nominations were received:-

- Councillor Creaney
- Councillor Carpenter
- Councillor S. Fitzpatrick
- Councillor Illmann-Walker

The Clerk undertook to convene a meeting before the end of 2011.

Resolved

That an informal Littering Working Group be established to consist of Councillors Creaney, Carpenter, S. Fitzpatrick and Illmann-Walker.

118/11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date and time of the next meeting would be 12 January, 2012 at 6.00 p.m. also that the Dog Fouling Working Group's final report be circulated and a report be submitted to the meeting on 12 January, 2012 providing an update.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 6.45 p.m.

Chair:.....

Date:.....

