

CORPORATE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 10 December 2009 at 6.00pm

Panel Members Present Councillor Longhi (Chair)
 Councillor Cook
 Councillor Harris
 Councillor Rochelle
 Councillor Turner
 Councillor Yasin

Portfolio Holders Present Cllr Arif- Business Support Services
 Cllr Towe- Finance and Personnel

Officers Present Rory Borealis- Executive Director (Resources)
 Michael Tomlinson- Corporate Financial Systems & Treasury Manager
 Colin Teasdale- Performance and Scrutiny Officer

36/09 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Nazir and Young

37/09 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting

38/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting

39/09 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2009, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

40/09 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2010/11- CORPORATE SERVICES

The Chair invited the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel to introduce the report and the background information to the forming of budget proposals for 2010/11. The Portfolio Holder explained that the proposals come in the context of challenging economic circumstances with projected decreases in government funding over the next few years. He explained that Cabinet had first identified their priority areas and asked

officers to bring forward saving and investment proposals based on these. He also explained that as well as being reported to each of the Scrutiny Panels, the budget also involved extensive consultation with the public, local businesses and the voluntary sector.

Both the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel and for Business Support Services then presented their proposals for investments and savings to the Panel and invited questions and comments.

Members asked a number of questions around the use of external consultants and felt it was important that council resources were only spent on consultants where this was a better value option than using in house resources and expertise. The Portfolio Holder for Business Support Services confirmed that the use of Habanero Consulting was being paid for by a specific grant from the West Midlands Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership which could not be used for any other purpose.

In relation to a query on the proposed investment of £225k into a 'corporate feasibility studies resource', the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel confirmed that this was being created to avoid the need for services to take the risk of carrying out feasibility studies from within their own revenue budget. It would also allow more central control over when these studies were carried out and avoid unnecessary spend. Members felt it was important that a close eye was kept on this resource and suggested that as the majority of spend would be within the Regeneration Scrutiny Panels remit that this the matter should be referred to this Panel to suggest they monitor spend going forward.

Following a query as to the meaning of saving proposal 36, the Executive Director (Resources) clarified that this related to the business support service and meant looking at this function across the council and find different ways of working to deliver the same level of service with a smaller number of staff.

In relation to saving proposals item number 84 (Efficiencies in external audit grant audits leaving to reduced audit fees) Members queried how this would be achieved and it was explained to them that that this would come from negotiation with the Council's appointed auditors over the amount of time needed to carry out the work. When Members asked how such an exact figure could be arrived at if this was just an anticipated saving it was explained that the figure was based on a percentage saving of current spend.

In response to a Member question, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Personnel confirmed that the savings for years 2 and 3 were estimates based on the current situation and were subject to review and change.

RESOLVED

That the draft revenue proposals for 2010/11 for the Business Support Services and Finance and Personnel portfolio are noted.

41/09 WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD PLAN

The Forward Plan issued on 7 December 2009 was tabled.

RESOLVED

That the Forward Plan issued on the 7 December 2009 be noted.

The meeting terminated at 7.30pm

Signed (Chair):

Date: