

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

MONDAY 29 November 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.

Panel Members Present

Councillor L. Beeley (Chair)
Councillor F. Westley (Vice-Chair)
Councillor D. Anson
Councillor R. Carpenter
Councillor J. Cook
Councillor M. Yasin

Other Members Present

Councillor T. Ansell – Transport

Officers Present

Jamie Morris - Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services)
Keith Stone - Assistant Director (Neighbourhood Services)
Steve Pretty (Head of Engineering and Transportation)
Steph Simcox (Service Accounting and Financial Training Manager)
Neil Picken (Senior Constitutional Services Officer)

32/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Tweddle and Munir.

33/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions.

34/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

None.

35/10 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November, 2010, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

36/10 DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET PROPOSALS 2011/12

Members considered the Cabinet's draft revenue budget proposals 2011/12 and services within the remit of the Panel. The Panel considered the budget proposals a Portfolio at a time.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhood Services) highlighted the 'cost pressures' and 'operational savings' being proposed for the Leisure, Culture and Environment Portfolio and also the Communities and Partnerships Portfolio. In doing so, it was reported that there were no executive savings proposed for either of these Portfolios. Due to the reduction in the budget, a greater emphasis would be placed on Working Smarter. This programme aimed to take out waste and improve efficiency to avoid any direct impact on frontline services.

In respect of the Leisure, Culture and Environment Portfolio, the following points were discussed:-

- Operational saving 13 - Depot relocation savings

Following a question by a Member of the Panel, officers explained that the items stored at the Aldridge Store would be relocated to the new depot in Pelsall Road.

- Operational saving 6 - efficiencies within Waste Services

Officers reported that saving would be achieved by reducing the level of sickness absence, introducing zonal working and improvements in the waste collection service. Reducing levels of sickness reduced the need for agency staff which resulted in a saving.

- Operational saving 11 - reduction in waste arising from gate fees

Officers reported that this was a significant savings due, in part, to the increase in recycling. As a result of which, less was being deposited in landfill.

In respect of the Communities and Partnership Portfolio, the following point was discussed:-

- Operational saving 22 - service re-structuring

A question was asked as to whether or not the re-structuring would affect the dog warden service. In response, it was stated that the re-structure would provide greater flexibility with roles being merged to enable individuals to undertake more varied workload.

In response to a question regarding the cost of cleaning and securing an area following gypsy and traveller encampment, it was stated that this varied from site to site. Further details would be passed to the relevant Member following the meeting.

The Transport Portfolio holder then highlighted the 'cost pressures' and 'operational savings' being proposed for the Transport Portfolio. The following points were raised:-

- Operational saving 25 - lean review of reactive highways maintenance service

Officers reported that whilst 2 of the 4 posts deleted were directly employed by the Council, they were confident that services could still be improved.

- Operational saving 27 - re-structure of services within Engineers

Officers reported that despite a loss of 8 posts, the minimum service required would be provided. Partners would be engaged to ensure that the service would be delivered effectively.

There then followed a discussion on lean reviews. Officers reported that the pothole repair service had been successfully re-modelled and no failures had been incurred since the revised service had been in operation.

Members questioned why efficiencies had not been sought prior to the budget pressures becoming apparent, in particular, in relation to tackling sickness absence. Officers advised that Local Authorities were constantly changing services and systems had been reviewed in the past.

The Executive Director (Neighbourhoods) then advised on the executive savings option which could generate £9,500 in income (per annum) for three years. This could be achieved by introducing charges for parking dispensations and increasing costs of resident's parking permits.

Resolved

That the proposed 2011/12 budget services within the remit of the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted.

37/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was 4 January 2011.

The meeting terminated at 6.35 p.m.

Chair:

Date: