

AT A MEETING
- of the
**REGENERATION, HOUSING,
ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY SAFETY
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**
held at The Council House, Walsall on
Thursday, 26 January 2006 at 6.00pm

PRESENT

Councillor Shires
Councillor Arif
Councillor Anson
Councillor Harrison
Councillor Robinson
Councillor Yasin

Paul Simpson (Head of Finance-Regeneration and Built Environment)
Dave Roberts (Service Manager-Waste Management)
Andy Ody (Service Manager-Grounds & Street Cleansing and Markets)
Martin Yardley (Assistant Director Regeneration)
Stuart Bentley (Scrutiny Officer)

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

There were no changes in membership for the duration of the meeting: -

APOLOGIES

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor Johnson and Councillor Longhi.

DRAFT CAPITAL PROGRAMME AND REVENUE BUDGET

(annexed)

Paul Simpson gave a presentation outlining the budget process to date and effect of the settlement on the Council's budget for 2006/7 and stated that the previously circulated Cabinet papers detailed the current budget position.

(annexed)

Council Arif asked what was meant by Corporate Financial Pressures.

Paul Simpson replied by giving examples such as: the short fall in projected revenue from an agreement with Walsall Housing Group regarding the sale of transferred stock; and the short fall in predicted revenue from a street advertising contract.

Councillor Shires asked what the position of the Street Advertising contract was and why there was a short.

Martin Yardley replied that it had been more difficult to locate the signage than had been anticipated and new road schemes had impacted on their placement.

Councillor Shires asked that a report on Street Advertising be brought back to the Panel for their consideration.

Paul Simpson tabled documents detailing the recommendations of the Panel at the previous budget meeting, held 25 November 2005, and whether these recommendations had been accepted as part of the revenue budget.

(annexed)

Councillor Shires asked Councillor Andrew how the budget had impacted on his portfolio.

Councillor Andrew replied that the impact was positive as the Town Centre Management scheme would roll-out as planned.

Martin Yardley stated that negotiations had already begun with partners in order to secure staffing that would release funds for the regeneration work to begin.

Councillor Robinson asked what Scrutiny's role was if, when they had taken time to recommend a cost neutral budget proposal at their last meeting, Cabinet had effectively ignored their recommendations.

Councillor Shires replied that he was inclined to agree and was of the opinion that scrutiny should be involved in the budget process much earlier in the year. He stated that there was little point in making further recommendations at this stage and he requested that the Portfolio Holders and Councillor O'Hare (Portfolio Holder for Resources) be invited to the April meeting of the Panel in order to discuss their budget proposals.

Councillor Andrew agreed that this would be a good idea as things were not getting any easier.

Councillor Shires further expressed his concerns around the apparent disparity between Councils and Cabinets approach to environmental issues.

Councillor Andrew also agreed and he stated that he was currently looking at social enterprises as a way forward.

Councillors Shires suggested that this could be a piece of work scrutiny could undertake by informing policy around social / community enterprises.

Paul Simpson stated that there was a current ODPM consultation paper entitled "Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping Their Future" which includes a section on the

role of overview and scrutiny and he suggested members may wish to input into the reply from the Council.

Councillor Shires agreed that this would be useful and suggested that all scrutiny panels receive a copy of the paper.

Councillor Andrew suggested that Cabinet also be informed.

Resolved:

That the Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel express its disappointment at Cabinet’s response to their recommendation following the panel’s meeting of 25 November 2005.

That the relevant Portfolio Holders and the Portfolio Holder for Resources be invited to the meeting of the Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel scheduled for 27 April 2006 to discuss their budget proposals.

That a report on the status of the Street Advertising contract be brought to the next meeting of the Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel scheduled for 23 February 2006.

That the Regeneration, Housing, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny and Performance Panel recommend that all Scrutiny and Performance Panels and Cabinet receive, and have an opportunity to feed back on, the ODPM consultation paper entitled “Local Strategic Partnerships: Shaping Their Future” before the end of the consultation period, 3 March 2006.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 6.55 p.m.

Signed.....

Date.....