



- Tim Johnson agreed to provide the Panel with further information on variances listed in table 4.
- Councillor Andrew explained that the St Matthews Quarter development was still intended to go ahead and even if the market had relocated as planned no building work would have commenced during 2009.

**Resolved:**

**That Tim Johnson provide a briefing note to Members providing further details on variances within the capital programme.**

**69/08 REGENERATION DIRECTORATE DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2009/10 – 2011/12**

Members considered the draft budget proposals for Walsall Councils Regeneration Directorate for 2009/10 – 2011/12.

Tim Johnson took the Panel through the financing cost investment bids, which were all linked to correcting income generation targets which had been affected due the current change in economic circumstances. He also explained the new investment bids; efficiencies and savings; fees and charges; and capital bids.

Members were concerned about the deletion of two principal planning officer posts in the enforcement and householder team (efficiency/saving 116) particularly when there was a national shortage of planning officers. Tim Johnson explained that these posts had been offered as savings due the current downturn in planning applications. Members noted that the current enforcement team was already stretched and suggested that it difficult economic conditions more enforcement officers were required as developers may potentially be tempted to cut corners to save costs. The Panel suggested that instead of making these posts redundant the option should be given for voluntary reduced hours so that skilled staff could be retained in this important area until such time that planning applications increased once more. On reflection Members felt that this should be the approach taken across the Council when posts were being considered for redundancy.

When considering the capital bids Tim Johnson informed the Panel that due to financial circumstances a reduced programme was being proposed. In response to a question on a capital bid for redhouse community centre Councillor Andrew reported that the Council's financial contribution had been met through a section 106 agreement.

The Panel suggested that the Council should engage in capacity building in the third sector to enable them to support themselves. Councillor Andrew noted that groups such as Walsall Voluntary Action received lottery grants to carry out this activity.

Councillor Shires asked for it be recorded that he abstained from voting on the Panels recommendations.

**Resolved:**

**That:**

1. **consideration be given to a voluntary reduced hours proposal or job share between existing employees to avoid the deletion of two principal planning officers as proposed in saving 116;**

**and;**

2. **consideration be given to voluntary reduced hours, job share or retraining schemes for all posts at risk of deletion or redundancy across the Council to retain skills within the workforce.**

**70/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 12 March 2009.

The meeting terminated at 7.15 p.m.

Chair:

Date: