

CENTRAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**27 January 2004****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Mitchell (Chairman) (P)

Bailey (P)
Carter (P)
Clohosey (P)
Davies (P)
Hoare (P)Hollingbery
Hutton (P)
Lipscomb
Nunn (P)
Oxley**Others in Attendance:**Councillor Learney (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)
Councillor Verney

1. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no questions asked or statements made.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 11 December 2003, be approved and adopted.

3. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the Scrutiny Work Programme as set out in the appendix to the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's Scrutiny Work Programme be noted.

**4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT - PERFORMANCE MONITORING
(Report CEN50 refers)**

In response to Members' comments on the report, the Chief Executive agreed to update all Members on the progress of the Community Strategy and work of the Local Strategic Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

5. **ESTATES BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**
(Report CEN47 refers)

Members considered the report and it was noted that whilst the budget for the Christmas Lights was likely to balance by the end of the financial year, the City Centre Manager was expected to present a report to the Winchester Town Forum and Cabinet that might request additions to this budget.

Members recommended that the review of the current property maintenance budget and assessment of energy efficiency be completed, notwithstanding the possible move to new offices.

The Committee also noted that the subsidy to the Winchester Farmers' Market would in the next year be nil, as the event became self sufficient and the Chief Executive added that it was the most successful event of its type in Hampshire.

RESOLVED:

1. That the budget monitoring against the Service and Subjective Summaries for April to December 2003/4 be noted, together with variances.
2. That progress against Business Plan actions for April to December 2003/4 be noted.

6. **REVIEW OF NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEFS POLICY GUIDELINES**
(Report CEN27 refers)

The Director of Finance explained that at its meeting on 3 December 2003 (report CAB748 refers), Cabinet had recommended that this Committee review the system of discretionary and hardship reliefs that the Council awarded to business rate payers. The review was required to ensure that the reliefs complied with recent changes in legislation and with the Council's corporate priorities.

RESOLVED:

That a Non-Domestic Rate Relief (NNDR) Policy Review Informal Group be formed with a membership of Councillors Bailey, Davies, Hoare, and Mitchell. In the absence of any Conservative Members of the Committee at the meeting, it was agreed that the Conservative Group Leader be asked, in consultation with the Chairman of the Community Arts and Social Performance Improvement Committee, to nominate one Conservative Member from the Community Arts and Social Committee. (Note: following the meeting, Councillor Watts was appointed)

7. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE MONITORING TO DECEMBER 2003
LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX**
(Report CEN46 refers)

Members congratulated the Director of Finance and her staff for the improved performance, particularly in regard to the outstanding workload of the Benefits and Taxation teams.

The Committee discussed the proposal to formalise the practice that credit card payments would not be accepted from Council Tax, Business Rates nor Housing Benefits customers. In response to questions, the Director explained that this was likely to be in line with the practice of most other local authorities.

During the debate on debt recovery, the Director explained that due principally to the Data Protection Act, it was possible for different departments of the Council to pursue the same debtor without knowledge of the other departments' actions.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet approval be sought to write off one debt of £20,388.99 for a company in administrative receivership.
2. That Cabinet be recommended that the ability to pay by credit card not be offered to customers who pay Council Tax, Business Rates or Housing Benefits Overpayments and that the current policy remains unchanged.

8. **CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

(Report CEN48 refers)

Members discussed and agreed the recommendations as set out in the report and congratulated the department on its overall performance. However, the position with regard to the current legal workload impacting on turnaround to customer's letters was noted.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That it be recommended to Cabinet that £24,000 be released from the Land Charges Reserve in 2004/05 for temporary staffing in the City Secretary and Solicitor's Department so that management time can be released for the computerisation project.

9. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

RESOLVED:

That the public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items of business because it is likely that, if members of the public were present, there would be disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

<u>Minute Number</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Description of Exempt Information</u>
##	Finance Department - Performance Monitoring (Exempt Appendix)) Information relating to any particular applicant for, or recipient or former recipient of any financial assistance by the authority. (Para 5 to Schedule 12a refers).)) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority). (Para 7 to Schedule 12a refers).

##	Commercial Property Arrears and Voids) Information relating to the) financial or business affairs of) any particular person (other than) the authority). (Para 7 to) Schedule 12a refers).)) Any terms proposed or to be) proposed by or to the authority) in the course of negotiations for) a contract for the acquisition or) disposal of property or the) supply of goods or services.) (Para 9 to Schedule 12a refers).
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10. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT - PERFORMANCE MONITORING TO DECEMBER 2003 – EXEMPT APPENDIX**
(Report CEN46 refers)

The Committee considered an exempt appendix to the above report, which explained the financial position of an organisation and possible options (detail in exempt minute).

11. **COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ARREARS AND VOIDS**
(Report CEN49 refers)

The Committee considered a report that gave details of commercial property arrears and voids (detail in exempt minute).

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.30pm