

CENTRAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

14 July 2004

Attendance:

Councillors:

Mitchell (Chairman) (P)

de Peyer (P)
Clohosey (P)
Hoare (P)
Hollingbery (P)
Hutton (P)

Lipscomb
Nelmes (P)
Pearce (P)
Verney (P)
Watts (P)

Deputy Members:

Councillor Mather (Standing Deputy for Councillor Lipscomb)

Others in Attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Allgood

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Lipscomb.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, held on 18 March 2004, be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Hoare be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2004-5 Municipal Year.

5. **DATE AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

RESOLVED:

That the dates and times of the future meetings of the Committee be agreed as set out in the calendar of meetings.

6. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT – 2003/4 OUT-TURN**
(Report CEN65 refers)

The Chief Executive answered questions on the report and explained that there remained only two Best Value Review Groups with on-going work - the Reviews of Heritage and Internal Services.

During debate, in addition to noting areas where performance targets had been reached, the Committee also noted some areas that had fallen short of their targets and acknowledged the remedies that had been suggested by the Chief Executive in the report.

RESOLVED:

1. That the achievements of the Chief Executive's Department in 2003/4 and the finance expended on these be noted and that the shortfalls and proposed remedies for these shortfalls also be noted.

2. That Cabinet be requested to approve carry forwards of a) £10,000 to fund a communications audit and savings as identified in paragraph 3.1 (b), and b) £10,000 to support further work on the community strategy as identified in paragraph 3.1 (d).

7. **REVIEW OF NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEFS (NNDR) POLICY GUIDELINES**
(Report CEN57 refers)

The Director of Finance introduced the report that set out the conclusions of the Committee's Informal Scrutiny Group Review of NNDR relief. It was explained that the proposed policy would attempt to focus the rate relief on organisations that meet local needs in the district and benefit local people and that categories of services that the Council wishes to support have been identified.

Members expressed concern that focusing the relief on those organisations that served only the local population could be to the detriment of many national or regional organisations that were based in the District. In addition to Members' concerns as to the possible effect the policy changes could have on these organisations and the wider community (in terms of employment and tourism), the Committee also requested further information on the potential costs to the Council if the take up of relief from eligible organisations increased. The Committee also noted the large rateable values of some of those eligible organisations. Whilst agreeing to the recommendation within the report, the Committee therefore requested that this additional information be reported to Cabinet, so as to better inform Cabinet's decision.

In response to a Member's question, the Director clarified that the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources was consulted upon all awards of relief and that any appeals would be brought to Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet be requested to approve the revised Council's policy guidelines for rate relief shown in Appendix A of the report.

2. That the Director of Finance present to Cabinet a report detailing further information and financial impact to the Council.

8. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2003/4**
(Report CEN56 refers)

Members agreed that additional information should be provided in future reports to better summarise the total debt owed to the Council to give trend information.

Members also agreed that national performance quartiles should be included in all appropriate statistics to provide comparisons with other local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet that the write off of two Business Rate debts totalling £26,057.35 be approved.

9. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT – SUMMARY OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE 2003/4**
(Report CEN55 refers)

RESOLVED:

1. That the out-turn figures 2003/4 for the Finance Department be noted.

2. That Cabinet be requested to approve carry forward of £10,000 savings as identified in paragraph 3.1 of the report for the improvement of toilet facilities within the City Offices.

10. **ESTATES SERVICE, DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT – SUMMARY OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUT-TURN 2003/4**
(Report CEN58 refers)

The Director of Development Services explained that in addition to the carry forwards in the report, it was requested that a further £3,000 of savings be carried forward as a contribution towards the Hampshire Broadband Service Level Agreement (which would form part of the Local Economy Section of the Estates Budget). Following debate, this was agreed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the out-turn figures 2003/4 for Estates, Development Services Department be noted.

2. That it be recommended to Cabinet the carry forward of £10,000 savings as identified in paragraphs 3.2 and 3.3 of the report be approved for the reasons stated.

3. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the carry forward of £3,000 for the Hampshire Broadband Service Level Agreement be approved.

11. **CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DEPARTMENT – SUMMARY OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE 2003/4**
(Report CEN63 refers)

RESOLVED:

1. That the out-turn figures for 2003/4 be noted.

2. That it be recommended to Cabinet that the carry forward of the following savings to the 2004/5 budget be approved:

- (a) (£49,000) – budget allocated for the additional transitional costs of the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003 – slippage due to changes in the timetable by the Government,
- (b) (£6,000) – Cemetery Maintenance – slippage due to work on railing/painting repair recommended to be undertaken in the summer period,
- (c) (£9,000) – Abbey House equipment and accessories repair/renewal – underspends from various CSS budgets have been identified to assist with funding backlog of such work.

12. **CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUT-TURN 2003/4**

(Report CEN64 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the performance monitoring report be noted.

13. **2004 DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

(Report CEN62 refers)

In response to Members' questions, the Chief Estates Officer explained that a formal review of the Council's property portfolio had been delayed by pressures on staff resources and added that such a review could take up to five years to complete.

Members questioned whether it was possible to use the Council's property assets to help achieve corporate priorities by charging lower rents. However, it was noted that Councils were under a general duty to get the best consideration for leases (over 7 years in length). Any other disposals at less than best consideration would have to be subject to consent from the Secretary of State. A general consent was available for certain transactions and in other cases specific applications had to be made. However, wherever possible the Council's approach had been to let properties at best consideration. The consequent benefits to the Council's income contributed towards the general services the Council provides to the public.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

14. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2004/5**

(Report PS139 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

15. **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>
##	Exempt Minutes of the previous meeting, held 18 March 2004) 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).
	Debtor Monitoring to June 2004) 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).)

16. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the previous meeting, held on 18 March 2004, relating to Debtor Monitoring, be approved and adopted.

17. **COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ARREARS AND VOIDS**
(Report CEN61 refers)

The Committee considered an exempt report that set out commercial property arrears and voids (detail in exempt minute).

18. **DEBTOR MONITORING TO JUNE 2004**
(Report CEN52 refers)

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

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.20pm

EXEMPT MINUTES – NOT FOR PUBLICATION

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19. **COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ARREARS AND VOIDS**

(Report CEN61 refers)

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That it be recommended to Cabinet that a letter be sent to Winchester Football Club, requiring them to finalise the licence and to enter into a repayment schedule over a three year term by 31 July 2004 or lose access to the Pavillon.

20. **DEBTOR MONITORING TO JUNE 2004**

(Report CEN60 refers)

The Director of Finance explained that the Winchester Alliance for Mental Health (WAMH) had made some progress towards repaying their debt to the Council. The charity had reduced the number of staff they employed, were reviewing the scale of head office service they provide, and were considering moving to cheaper premises and the Director confirmed that the Council now only paid the Charity's payroll on prior receipt of the covering amount. The Charity were seeking to employ a Finance Officer and it was noted that the Director of Finance would advise the Charity on the job description.

During debate it was agreed that the Trustees of the Charity should be requested to enter into a programme of repayment to clear the debt by March 2006 if possible and that options should be investigated to ensure if possible that the Council had a priority claim. Members also noted with regret the apologies of a Trustee of the charity who was unable to attend the meeting, and requested that at all future meetings that considered the debt, a representative attend and a system of deputies was suggested.

RESOLVED:

That it be recommended to Cabinet that:

- a) The Winchester Mental Health Alliance be asked to report to the next meeting of the Central Services Performance Improvement Committee their proposals to agree a programme for the repayment of outstanding debt by March 2006.
- b) That officers report to the next meeting on whether it was possible for the Council to achieve priority status in respect of claims against the assets of WAMH.
- c) That a representative of the Charity be asked to attend future meetings of the Committee to explained progress by the Trustees on reducing the outstanding debt.

Chairman