

CENTRAL SERVICES PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE**25 January 2005**Attendance:

Councillors:

Mitchell (Chairman) (P)

de Peyer
Cooper (P)
Clohosey (P)
Hoare (P)
Hollingbery (P)Higgins (P)
Lipscomb (P)
Nelmes (P)
Pearce
Verney (P)Deputy Members:

Councillor Davies (Standing Deputy for Councillor de Peyer)

Members in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Learney (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors de Peyer and Pearce.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting, held 2 December 2004, be approved and adopted.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT – THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE MONITORING

(Report CEN85 refers)

The Chief Executive summarised the report and updated Members that the new Head of Policy post had been successfully filled and that the method of measuring unanswered telephone calls was under review to produce a more meaningful performance indicator.

Members raised concerns over the decision to re-launch the Council's "Insight" newsletter in March 2005 and the Chief Executive agreed to investigate and report back to Members on this issue.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, subject to Members' concerns regarding the re-launch of the Council's "Insight" newsletter.

5. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE MONITORING TO DECEMBER 2004**
(Report CEN78 refers)

During the discussion, the Director of Finance clarified a number of issues within the report and Members commented on the collection of local taxes, housing benefits overpayments, the performance indicators for e-governance, and the payment of invoices.

The Committee welcomed the newly appointed Customer Service Centre Manager, who explained that the project was proceeding on target and should go live in June 2005. It was noted that a Members' Training Evening, to be held on 16 February 2005, would focus on the issues related to the Customer Service Centre.

RESOLVED:

That the report and the current position relating to external debt be noted.

6. **ESTATES, DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT – SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURE AND THE THIRD QUARTER 2004/05**
(Report CEN80 refers)

RESOLVED:

1. That the budget monitoring figures and variances for the third quarter 2004/05 for Estates, Development Services, be noted.

2. That the progress against the key priority Business Plan actions for the third quarter 2004/05 for Estates, Development Services, be noted.

7. **CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE MONITORING**
(Report CEN84 refers)

During discussion, the City Secretary and Solicitor clarified a number of issues relating to the new Licensing Act and updated Members on the progress of the Bapsy Bequest. He explained that any significant changes to the plans for the Bequest would be presented to Members.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet be recommended to approve the carry forward to 2005/06 of £49,000, which was originally carried forward from the 2003/04 budget for transitional costs for the introduction of the Licensing Act 2003, in view of the slippage in the Government's timetable for implementation.

2. That the report be noted.

8. **CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S FEES AND CHARGES 2005/06**

(Report CEN83 refers)

During its consideration of the proposed fees and charges Members agreed that, in the circumstances of the Council's overall budget, the above inflation increases in relation to cemetery charges were a necessary step to ensure the continued high level of service and maintenance.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet be recommended to approve:

1. The standard Land Charges fee of £130 be increased to £140 with effect from 1 April 2005.

2. Cemetery Charges be increased with effect from 1 April 2005 by an average of 10%, as set out in Appendix C, and that the City Secretary and Solicitor be authorised to amend other cemetery charges to achieve the same average overall percentage increase.

9. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT BUSINESS PLAN 2005/06**

(Report CEN82 refers)

Members discussed the Council's efforts to achieve the Gershon Targets and noted that a Working Group, led by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, was in the process of drafting a plan to be submitted to Cabinet and then the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). Although the details of the Gershon Targets had not yet been finalised by Government, the Director of Finance commented that the anticipated 2.5% yearly savings were likely to include efficiency as well as cost savings.

During discussion, the Committee considered the role of the Customer Service Centre in achieving savings and noted the Centre's reliance upon an improved Council website with increased links to services provided by the County Council.

Members were concerned by the high level of staff absences through sickness, but noted the improvement in these figures as a result of initiatives agreed by the Personnel Committee.

Further information was provided to Members in respect of the collection of money from car parks and this was considered under exempt business (detail in Exempt Minute).

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet be recommended to approve the Finance Department Business Plan 2005/06, subject to any necessary minor amendments to be delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.

10. **WINCHESTER ALLIANCE FOR MENTAL HEALTH**
(Report CEN81 refers)

Councillor Davies declared a personal, but not prejudicial interest, in this item as he was a member of the Winchester Housing Group, which had let properties to the Winchester Alliance for Mental Health (WAMH).

Councillor Hollingbery declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item as a former Trustee of the WAMH. Councillor Hollingbery left the room during the consideration of this item and took no part in the debate.

The report set out the history of WAMH, the Council's involvement with the charity and the circumstances of the charity's debt to the Council. It was noted that independent auditor's and the liquidator's reports on the charity would be considered by Members in the near future.

In response to a Member's question, the Director of Finance explained that she was not sure what arrangements had been made for another organisation to take over the duties performed by WAMH, although many of these services remained the responsibility of the County Council.

With regard to the debt, the Director confirmed that Members had not acted against advice from the Council's professional officers.

Following debate, the proposed revised policy for the provision of external payroll services were agreed as set out in Appendix D to the report.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet be recommended to endorse the revised Policy for the Provision of External Payroll Services, as set out in Appendix D to the report.

11. **PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**
(Report PS153 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12. **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>
##	Minutes of the previous meeting, held 2 December 2004 (Debtor Monitoring to June 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).)) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority). (Para 7 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) 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).
	Finance Department – Performance Monitoring to December 2004) Any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

13. **EXEMPT MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING, HELD 2 DECEMBER 2004**

RESOLVED:

That the Exempt Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 2 December 2004 (regarding Debtor Monitoring Update to June 2004) be approved and adopted.

14. **COMMERCIAL PROPERTY ARREARS AND VOIDS**
(Report CEN79 refers)

The Committee considered an exempt report which set out commercial property arrears and voids.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

15. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE MONITORING TO DECEMBER 2004**
(Oral Report)

In view of recent thefts of cash from car park machines the Chairman agreed to accept this item on the agenda as a matter of urgency. The Committee considered an exempt update on the collection of money from car parks (detail in exempt minute) and noted action being taken.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.20pm.