

**RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL****16 July 2007****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Wright (Chairman) (P)

Anthony (P)  
Bell  
Fitzgerald (P)  
Goodall  
Hiscock (P)Humby (P)  
Huxstep (P)  
Jeffs (P)  
Learney (P)  
Maynard (P)  
Verney (P)**Deputy Members in attendance:**

Councillor Chamberlain (Standing Deputy for Councillor Goodall)

**Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:**

Councillor Allgood (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)

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**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Bell and Goodall.

**2. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Councillor Allgood declared a personal and prejudicial interest due to his involvement as a Cabinet Member in actions taken or proposed in the Reports outlined below.

However, the Panel asked the Portfolio Holder to remain in the meeting, under the provisions of Sections 21(13)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000, in order that he could provide additional information to the Panel and/or answer questions.

**3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Huxstep be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

4. **TIME OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

RESOLVED:

That future meetings of the Panel commence at 6.30pm for the 2007/08 Municipal Year and that the timetable of scheduled meetings for the 2007/08 Municipal Year be noted.

5. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 March 2007 be approved and adopted.

6. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

7. **FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO (ESTATES) – FOURTH QUARTER 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUTTURN**  
(Report RE49 refers)

The Head of Estates reported that the Division had experienced a busy year in 2006/07, carrying out significant reviews which had been of benefit to the Council. There had been a slight overspend in the budget, which had been due to the use of additional consultants, mainly for the Silver Hill development, although those costs had since been reimbursed by the developers.

Responding to questions from Members, the Head of Estates confirmed that the figures did not include income from Avalon House, but that the property was still being actively marketed and that he was hopeful a successful letting would be made in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.

8. **FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO – HUMAN RESOURCES 2006/07 OUTTURN REPORT**  
(Report RE50)

Councillor Allgood highlighted that there had been some success in reducing sickness levels across the organisation and confirmed that there was ongoing work on this issue. The Head of Organisational Development explained that long term sickness was anything over 40 days, but that this could not be predicted.

Responding to a question from a Member, the Head of Organisational Development stated that the Council linked in with other partners, such as Winchester Area Community Action and Hampshire County Council, to monitor the ethnic profile in the area. This assisted in monitoring the recruitment and retention of ethnic minority staff to reflect the population profile of the District.

It was noted that paternity leave was not generally included in the current performance monitoring figures and it was agreed that this should be incorporated into future reports.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.
2. That figures for paternity leave be included in future Performance Monitoring reports.

9. **FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO – FORMER FINANCE DIRECTORATE  
FOURTH QUARTER 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUTTURN**  
(Report RE45 refers)

Councillor Allgood reported that the Benefits Team had been recognised by the Department for Works and Pensions as having performed outstandingly over the past 12 months; the Team received the highest score available for five of the six key Performance Standards. He continued that the number of website hits had increased significantly and that there were several technical projects ongoing which would increase efficiency. The Customer Service Centre had also been very successful, despite a slight delay on Phase Two of the project.

Responding to questions from the Panel, the Head of IMT reported that the majority of renewed car parking season tickets were now completed online. The possibility of introducing a system to allow parking tickets to be purchased through mobile phones had been researched, but it had been agreed to leave this until the Silver Hill development had commenced.

During discussion, Members raised the issue of overspend in printing and graphics. Councillor Allgood reported that a meeting had taken place to consider all the current Council publications and the total expenditure thereon. Proposals on how to reduce this expenditure would be brought to Cabinet in due course. Achieved targets on work completed within the Design and Print section was also discussed. The Head of Finance explained that the performance in 2006/07 had been affected by long term sickness within the section and that the targets set for future years were considered to be realistic.

It was noted by the Panel that the targets set for the Customer Service Centre had been realigned to reflect national standards and that, in comparison to the industry as a whole, the City Council matched or bettered those standards. The Customer Service Manager explained that, in terms of staff, the Centre was an entry level into the Council and consequently staff turnover was generally high, as people moved on to other positions within the Council. This was an ongoing issue as there was continual recruitment and training, but efforts to retain and develop staff were being made.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.
2. That the Benefits Team be congratulated on their success over the past year.

10. **FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO – FORMER CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DERECTORATE FOURTH QUARTER 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONOTORING**  
(Report RE46 refers)

Councillor Allgood reported that the number of formal meetings serviced by Democratic Services had been successfully reduced. The elections had run smoothly, despite the new rules relating to the scanning of postal votes. He added that the number of licences being issued had increased significantly, as had technical work by the Legal Section.

The Corporate Director (Governance) updated the Panel on the issues surrounding the Bapsy bequest, explaining that it was linked to the wider issue of options for the Council buildings. The Chief Executive would report to Members on proposals shortly.

RESOLVED:

That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.

11. **FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO – PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2007/08**  
(Report RE48 refers)

The Panel noted the new approach being adopted for performance monitoring reports for the Scrutiny Panels. It was reported that the new format was designed to focus on areas of concern within Divisions, as well as bring to the attention of Members areas where there had been exceptional achievements. This would allow the Panel more time during meetings to focus on the real areas of need.

Responding to questions from the Panel, the Corporate Director (Governance) explained that Hockley Viaduct had been acquired in the 1970's, along with several other significant assets. The Head of Estates reported that external funding had been sought in the past to help maintain the structure but none had been received. He added that a report outlining proposals for the long term future of the Viaduct would go to Cabinet in the Autumn, but that it would have to be maintained in a good condition to ensure that it remained safe. Although this would be expensive, a rolling programme of maintenance would be suggested.

The Head of IMT responded to queries regarding the data security standards for credit card information collected by the Council. She explained that the deadline for compliance had been changed as many companies could not make the original target. Due to the ongoing work on this project, it was hoped that the Council would be compliant by the end of the financial year. Work on this project was being absorbed by the current resources available and nothing from the Business Plan had been postponed.

During discussion, the Head of IMT reported that investigations into purchasing a disaster recovery package from Digica had taken place, but it was felt the package they could provide was too expensive and would only give limited cover. A location at Eastleigh had since been earmarked and discussions were taking place to install a network line and to use some of the older servers to use as backup. Work would continue to be ongoing on this project.

It was reported that, although there had been some issues with Anite (document management system) for publishing planning documents on the Internet, the Head of IMT advised that other Councils were also experiencing similar difficulties and it was one of the reasons for moving to a new EDRM (Electronic Document and Records Management system). In view of the website difficulties, consideration was being given as to whether Planning went into year one of the rollout.

RESOLVED:

1. That general statistics on the average time for processing new benefits claims be included in future report cards to this Panel.
2. That future reports include details of how actual Council Tax collection compared to targets in the Business Plan.

12. **WORK PROGRAMME AND APPOINTMENT OF INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUPS**  
(Report RE47 refers)

The Head of Organisational Development informed the Panel that a report on the Flexible Working Strategy was going to Cabinet in September 2007 which would outline the progress of the project so far.

RESOLVED:

1. That the E-Government Informal Scrutiny Group not be reappointed.
2. That the proposed Flexible Working Informal Scrutiny Group be not appointed at this time and that consideration would be given to the need for this Group following the report to Cabinet in September 2007.
3. That a Procurement Informal Scrutiny Group be established with membership as follows: Councillors Hiscock, Huxstep, Learney and Verney.

13. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**  
(Report PS284 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS284, be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.05pm

Chairman