

**RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL****13 July 2005**Attendance:

## Councillors:

Hollingbery (Chairman) (P)

Clohosey (P)  
 Cooper (P)  
 Darbyshire  
 Davies (P)  
 Higgins (P)

Hoare (P)  
 Jeffs (P)  
 Mitchell (P)  
 Pearce (P)  
 Verney (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Learney (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)

171. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

172. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

## RESOLVED:

That Councillor Hoare be appointed Vice-Chairman for the 2005/06 Municipal Year.

173. **DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

## RESOLVED:

That the dates for future meetings be agreed as 6.30pm on 1 December 2005, 31 January 2006, and 21 March 2006. As the next scheduled meeting of 25 October 2005 fell in half-term, it was agreed that the City Secretary and Solicitor would canvass Members' availability for an alternative date.

174. **ESTATES DIVISION, DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE – SUMMARY OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE 2004/05 AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUTTURN 2004/05**  
(Report RE6 refers)

In response to Members' questions, the Director of Finance agreed to email the Panel further explanations regarding depreciation charges (line "n" of the report).

At the conclusion of the debate, the Panel congratulated the officers for an actual expenditure variance of less than 1% of the net budget.

## RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the carry forward of £20,000 savings as identified in paragraph 3.1 for local Christmas lights be noted.

175. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE – PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2004/05**  
(Report RE4 refers)

In considering the report, the Panel noted that most of the delays against the performance targets had resulted due to the appointment of the Head of Policy post, taking place later than had been envisaged when the targets were set. The Chief Executive added that other delays that related to delivering the Sustainability Strategy were partially a consequence of delays from cross-Directorate working. With all these problems, it was noted that measures had been taken to improve performance.

The Panel also discussed the Council's complaints procedure which was ultimately administered by the Chief Executive's Directorate. During discussion, Members noted that an improved and more consistent approach to dealing with complaints was likely as a consequence of the new Customer Service Centre. They also drew attention to the need to improve response times to correspondence, as a key component of good customer care.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

176. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DIRECTORATE – FIRST QUARTER MONITORING – FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO (OTHER)**  
(Report RE8 refers)

During consideration of the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources answered questions on staffing levels and efficiency and the Director of Finance agreed to update Members on the staff training budget.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

177. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT – PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2004/05 AND 2005/06**  
(Report RE2 refers)

The Director of Finance updated the Panel on the soft launch of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and explained that despite initial technical telephone problems, the Centre had been well received by the public and that staff morale was high. She added that a review of the Centre's performance (against baseline figures collected before introduction of the CSC) would be evaluated before it was rolled out to include other services as Phase Two. This review would be reported to Cabinet and would include any efficiencies gained by the CSC. Following debate, it was agreed that the report should also be considered by this Panel for comment.

The Panel also noted that, primarily because of staff absence, some performance targets in the Benefits Section had been missed and it was agreed that this would be

considered at the next Panel meeting. The Panel also discussed the delay regarding the e-government programme.

At the conclusion of debate, the Panel agreed that it should concentrate on scrutinising executive policies and performance against these policies and detailed questions of services would be discouraged. Any detailed questions should be raised with the relevant officers before the meeting. The matter should only then be raised in the meeting itself if it raised important issues.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

178. **FINANCE DEPARTMENT – SUMMARY OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE 2004/05**  
(Report RE1 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

179. **CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DIRECTORATE – SUMMARY OF ACTUAL EXPENDITURE 2004/05**  
(Report RE3 refers)

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

180. **CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DIRECTORATE – BUSINESS PLAN PERFORMANCE MONITORING OUTTURN – 2004/05**  
(Report RE5 refers)

The City Secretary and Solicitor answered Members' questions regarding postal votes, changes in polling station districts and Section 106 Agreements.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

181. **CITY SECRETARY AND SOLICITOR'S DIRECTORATE – PERFORMANCE MONITORING FIRST QUARTER, 2005/06 – PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES**  
(Report RE7 refers)

During debate, Members discussed the implications of the Licensing Act 2000 and raised concerns regarding its effect on the Directorate's workload for the summer/autumn period. A significant number of applications from existing licensees had not yet been made and that under the terms of the Act, all of these applications had to be lodged by 6 August 2005. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport had acknowledged that this was a national problem. There was also a significant risk that if applications were not received that a number of premises would not be licensed to trade in November. The City Secretary and Solicitor explained that publicity had been given at local and national level to encourage applications. He would allocate staff to process the peak in applications and this would have a consequential impact on other work priorities.

The Panel also questioned the delay in progressing the Bapsy Bequest and the City Secretary and Solicitor explained that this was largely as a result of prioritising corporate work loads, such as the Silver Hill Development.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that Cabinet be advised of the effects of the Licensing Act 2000 on the Directorate.

182. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel considered its draft Scrutiny Work programme for 2005/06 which was attached to the agenda.

Following debate, the Panel agreed that the Principal Scrutiny Committee should be asked to ensure a thorough scrutiny of the 2006/07 Financial Strategy.

In response to comments regarding a possible review of the Serco Contract, the City Secretary and Solicitor explained that the Principal Scrutiny Committee was currently keeping this under review.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme be agreed as set out, subject to requesting that Principal Scrutiny Committee ensures a thorough scrutiny of the 2006/07 Financial Strategy.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.00pm

Chairman  
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