

RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL

7 December 2005

Attendance:

Councillors:

Hollingbery (Chairman)
Cooper (Chairman for the meeting) (P)

Clohosey (P)
Davies (P)
Higgins (P)
Hoare

Jeffs
Mitchell (P)
Pearce
Spender (P)
Verney (P)

Deputy Members:

Councillor Wright (Standing Deputy for Councillor Jeffs)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Learney (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)

570. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Hoare, Hollingbery and Jeffs.

571. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN FOR THE MEETING**

RESOLVED:

That in the absence of Chairman (Councillor Hollingbery) and the Vice Chairman (Councillor Hoare), Councillor Cooper be appointed Chairman for the meeting.

572. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meetings of the Panel held on 13 July and 19 October 2005 be approved and adopted.

573. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

574. **CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR THE CORPORATE STRATEGY AND BUDGET 2006-2009**
(Report RE12 refers)

During consideration of the above Report, the Panel also referred to CAB1149, Roll Forward of Corporate Strategy and Revenue Budget 2006/09 (Update) which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 16 November 2005. This Report set out possibilities for growth and savings relevant to the overview of this Panel on pages 11 – 14 of Appendix 2. Members noted that the corresponding existing base budgets for 2006/07 were set out as an appendix to Report RE12.

Referring to the proposals for the Procurement Officer (item 35); the Chief Executive explained that a number of accrued savings had been identified to date. These would be reported to Cabinet in January 2006 as part of a recommendation to continue the post.

Responding to a question, the City Secretary and Solicitor explained although there was likely to be a continued reduction in the volume of Land Searches undertaken for the foreseeable future (item 35), this would still remain as a statutory service for the Council.

The Director of Finance clarified that the savings related to the Customer Service Centre (item 40) were linked to streamlining of procedures to create a more efficient operation. She acknowledged that training of staff was essential in this process.

The Panel referred to the possibility of savings by closure of the Cash Office (item 41) and the Director explained why it was recommended that the service should not be withdrawn at this time. Although there would be no initial efficiency savings in the current year, the Panel noted that there would be savings from the closure of the Parking Office and transfer of the frontline services to the Customer Service Centre. Following a request, the Director agreed to circulate to the Panel the previous review of the Cash Office, as background information.

The Chief Executive stated that the Review of Publications and Design, Print & Word Processing (item 42) was in hand. The Panel noted that this review was due to identify efficiency savings of £100,000 as part of the proposals for the Revenue Budget 2006/09, which equated to approximately 30 per cent of the existing Design & Print section staffing budget.

The Director of Finance responded to a number of questions regarding the reduction of Insurance Costs (item 43). It was confirmed that the savings were cumulative figures and representative of approximately 10-15 per cent savings on the total insurance bill and resultant of a robust review of the Council's insurance cover through better risk management.

Referring to the discussion of Procurement Savings (item 47), particularly that associated with temporary staff, the Director stated that this saving was not linked to Managed Savings in Staffing Costs (item 59). She advised that there should not be double counting regarding all the identified opportunities for savings.

Members referred to the proposed review of the lease car scheme (item 61) and the Director confirmed that the review would encompass all Council related travel and associated sustainability issues. The Panel noted that any decision regarding the scheme would require Member endorsement and it was agreed that the existing scheme be compared with that of other organisations. It was requested that the

results of the previous review of the leasing scheme be circulated to the Panel as background information.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel notes the possibilities for growth and savings but expresses some reservations about whether all can be achieved as part of the budget for 2006/07.

575. **E-GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME**
(Report RE14 refers)

The Director of Finance reported that the Council's latest Implementing Electronic Government Statement (IEG5) was to be considered by Cabinet on 14 December 2005. Report RE14 set out the proposed budgets to fully implement most aspects of the programme. It was noted that the priorities as identified were not necessarily those of the Council, but were set by Government and linked to grant payment which helped mitigate some of the expenditure.

Following discussion of the potential for long term savings and increased efficiencies arising from the programme, the Panel noted that a business case for each project would need to be made for the necessary capital and revenue funding. Approval would then be made by either Cabinet or the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources under delegated authority.

RESOLVED:

That E-government Programme as set out be noted.

576. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Director of Finance advised that a training session on the Benefits service would be held as part of the next meeting and following that, particular areas for review would be identified.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Work Programme for the Panel as set out be agreed.
2. That the following appointments to the E-Government Implementation Informal Scrutiny Group be agreed:

Councillors Cooper, Davies, Hollingbery and Spender

The meeting commenced at 5.30pm and concluded at 7pm

Chairman