

**PRINCIPAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**16 January 2006**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Allgood (Chairman) (P)

Beckett (P)  
Bidgood (P)  
Cook (P)  
Clohosey (P)  
Chamberlain (P)

Davies (P)  
Lipscomb (P)  
Mitchell (P)  
Stallard (P)  
Steel (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Campbell (Leader of the Council)  
Councillor Wagner (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Godfrey and Hammerton

---

668. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made no announcements.

669. **MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of its previous meetings held on 5 and 12 December 2005. During discussion of the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2005 referring to the Silver Hill Development Landowner's Approval (report CAB1179 refers), Councillors Davies, Lipscomb and Mitchell withdrew from the meeting as they were members of the Planning Development Control Committee. They had been previously advised by the City Secretary and Solicitor that it would not be appropriate for them to be present if they were to be involved in the determination of the Silver Hill planning application.

Members noted that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2005 (and recommendations therein) had been considered by Cabinet on 9 January 2006. The City Secretary and Solicitor updated the Committee on Cabinet's considerations of the Minutes and explained that as a consequence, two additional recommendations had been made to Council on 1 February 2006. One of these recommendations referred to commercially sensitive information and was considered under exempt business.

## RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meetings of the Committee held on 5 December and 12 December 2005 be approved and adopted (less exempt minutes).

670. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Councillor Wagner (Portfolio Holder for Environmental Health) reported that following recent press reports on proposals for changes to the delivery of the Fire and Rescue service throughout the district, he had been advised that Hampshire Fire and Rescue had intended to consult with the Council, but had inadvertently neglected to do so. The Fire and Rescue Service had now indicated that they would be pleased to attend an appropriate meeting of Councillors to discuss their plans.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a representative be invited to attend a future meeting of the Social Issues Scrutiny Panel to report on the plans. The Chief Executive and Councillor Hammerton (Chairman of the Social Issues Scrutiny Panel) confirmed that this arrangement was acceptable and would be arranged in due course.

671. **INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE TO 31 DECEMBER 2005**

(Report PS214 refers)

Seven audits were identified within the report as unlikely to be completed this year because of unforeseen staff absence in the last quarter of the year within the Audit team.

## RESOLVED:

1. That the matters raised by Internal Audit and action taken by Management be noted.

2. That the 7 audits identified as unlikely to be completed in this year, and reasons for this, be noted.

672. **COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

(Report PS201 refers)

The Committee noted that this item had been previously deferred at the meeting of the Committee held on 5 December 2005.

Although noting that there were some initial delays in the implementation of the Strategy's Improvement Plan, Members welcomed the Chief Executive's reports of progress in the compilation of a Media Handbook; improvements to the Council's website and in particular, the production of an on-line newsletter for Parish Councils. Members were of the view that a similar online newsletter would be of benefit to County Councillors.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the 'Perspectives' magazine should continue to be representative of the work of the Council in the whole District and should also endeavour to identify issues of local relevance across the District. Further to a Member's request, it was also agreed that a full list of the Council's publications be circulated to Members of the Committee for information.

## RESOLVED:

That Cabinet's attention be drawn to the following matters raised by the Committee in their consideration of the Corporate Communications Strategy:

- (i) That production of an on-line newsletter for Parish Councils be particularly progressed as soon as possible.
- (ii) That a similar on line newsletter be also produced for County Councillors.

673. **RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

(Report PS213 refers)

The Director of Finance agreed to include the full list of Strategic Risks as an appendix to the next Risk Management Update Report.

## RESOLVED:

- 1. That the progress on the current Risk Management arrangements and the further action being taken to complete risk identification and analysis process for business planning in 2006/07 be noted.
- 2. That the full list of Strategic Risks be included as an appendix to the next Risk Management Update Report.

674. **THIRD QUARTER PERFORMANCE MONITORING – LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

(Report PS212 refers)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Councillor Campbell, Leader of the Council.

The Leader responded to a number of questions and clarified issues regarding the achievement of agreed corporate objectives.

Following some expressions of concern over the interpretation of the progress indicators within the appendices, the Chief Executive acknowledged that any changes to the agreed timetable should be explained.

Referring to Appendix 2, Corporate Dashboard, Members noted with concern the performance indicator for days sick per member of staff. Following discussion, it was agreed that as the figures for Quarter 3 (October – December 2005) were not available in time for publication of the report, these should be verbally reported to the meeting of the Personnel Committee on 23 January 2006. Furthermore, it was agreed that a report on sickness absence be provided to a future meeting of the Personnel Committee.

Also referring to Appendix 2, Corporate Dashboard, the Leader explained that the delays in processing changes in circumstances for Housing Benefits claims were as a result to revisions to associated national legislation and delays with computer software updates being available. The targets would be revised to reflect the lengthened process. It was agreed that the Portfolio

Holder for Finance and Resources be encouraged to continue to monitor the position.

RESOLVED:

That the Leader and the Chief Executive have regard to the issues as identified from the third quarter performance monitoring as detailed above and in particular:

(a) That the sickness per member of staff figure for Quarter 3 (October – December 2005) be verbally reported to the meeting of the Personnel Committee on 23 January 2006 and that a report on sickness absence be also provided to a future meeting of the Personnel Committee.

(b) That the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources be encouraged to continue to monitor the performance for determinations of “Housing Benefits Changes in Circumstances”.

675. **CONSULTATION ON CORPORATE STRATEGY AND REVENUE BUDGET 2006/07**  
(Report PS211 refers)

The Committee also referred to the reports on the Roll Forward of Corporate Strategy (Report CAB1185 refers) and Revenue Budget (Report CAB1171 refers) as part of their consideration of this item.

It was noted that Report PS211 additionally contained further information on four issues considered by the Social Issues Scrutiny Panel as part of the budget process that had been referred to the Committee.

(i) Homecheck

It was acknowledged that as Homecheck provided a valuable service to vulnerable residents, Cabinet should revisit potential alternative partnership funding before considering cessation of the service and identification of this as a saving in the 2006/07 budget.

(ii) Health for All Budget underspend

The Committee supported the proposals to reduce permanently the budget to achieve the proposed saving.

(iii) Meals on Wheels

The Director of Communities answered a number of questions regarding aspects of the service and confirmed that there was no statutory obligation for the Council to make financial contributions.

It was agreed that the Meals on Wheels service provides a valued service to local residents and that it should be maintained and enhanced where possible, within budgetary constraints. It was also agreed that Members should be party to the outcome of the County Council's impending review of the service and negotiations in June 2006 regarding the new contract for the provision of meals. Therefore, the Committee supported the officers'

suggestion that consideration of potential savings be deferred until the 2007/08 financial year.

(iv) Discretionary Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) payments

In respect of this item, Councillors Beckett and Clohosey declared a personal (but not prejudicial) interest as the community facilities that they were involved in were in receipt of the discretionary payment. They both spoke and voted thereon.

It was agreed that the changes to the policy following the initial review of the scheme were acceptable; however there should be no further recommendation for changes at this time. The savings already achieved were therefore accepted as identified savings.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet note the decisions of the Committee regarding the matters referred to the Committee by the Social Issues Scrutiny Panel as set out in detail above and summarised below:

(i) Homecheck

That Cabinet revisit potential alternative partnership funding before considering cessation of the service as a saving in the 2006/07 budget.

(ii) Health for All Budget underspend

That the proposals to permanently reduce the budget to achieve the proposed saving be supported.

(iii) Meals on Wheels

That Cabinet be advised that the Meals on Wheels service provides a valued service to local residents and that it should be maintained and enhanced where possible, within budgetary constraints.

(iv) Discretionary Non Domestic rates (NNDR) payments

That the savings already achieved following review of associated Council policies be accepted but Cabinet be informed that the Committee considers there is no need for a further review at this time.

676. **ROLL FORWARD OF CORPORATE STRATEGY 2006/09**  
(Report CAB1185 refers)

The Committee noted that that Cabinet would consider this report at its meeting on 18 January 2006.

Following reference to the draft Corporate Strategy as set out as an Appendix to the report, the following suggestions for changes to the Strategy were agreed:

Safer and More Inclusive Communities

- (i) Although accepting that the values promoted in the Strategy were in headline form, the Committee commented that residents' access to services and cultural opportunities (especially in some rural areas) could be hindered by a lack of public transport. Therefore Cabinet was requested to give higher priority to investigating matters related to this, including associated subsidy provision.
- (ii) A Member suggested that the following sentence in the 'Safer and More Inclusive Communities' Section be supplemented by the words in italics (and suggested alternative wording rejected):

'Improve health outcomes by encouraging more active *and healthy* lives.'

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet have regard to the following comments:

(i) That it bear in mind the recent Hampshire County Council reductions in public transport subsidy when considering its approach to transport strategy.

(ii) That, in general, the original wording of the strategy contained in CAB1185 is preferred, rather than the suggested alternatives.

677. **REVENUE BUDGET 2007/09**  
(Report CAB1171 refers)

The above item had not been notified for inclusion on the agenda within the statutory deadline. The Chairman agreed to accept the item onto the agenda as a matter requiring urgent consideration, because of the necessity for the Committee to comment on the proposals in advance of Cabinet on 18 January 2006 and Council on 23 February 2006.

Members noted that the Scrutiny Panels had already commented upon specific areas of relevance of the proposals for the Budget and that elements referred by the Social Issues Scrutiny Panel to the Committee had been dealt with as part of the Committee's consideration of Report PS211 Consultation on Corporate Strategy and Revenue Budget 2006/07, above.

The Committee discussed whether Cabinet should be requested to investigate a rise in Council tax nearer in line with current inflation (closer to 3 per cent) as opposed to the 4.9 per cent as included in projections detailed in the report. However, a consequence of this was likely to be increased use of the Council's Reserves, the majority of Members rejected this proposal. Instead it was agreed that Cabinet should base their discussion on the projections given in the report and be mindful of the Committee's observations that it would be preferable to look for savings in expenditure rather than use of Reserves.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee suggest that in indicating which of the growth and savings proposals for 2006/07 should be incorporated in the Revenue Budget 2006/07, Cabinet looks for savings in expenditure rather than use of Reserves.

678. **MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANELS**

The Committee considered the minutes of the following meetings:

- (i) Social Issues Scrutiny Panel held 28 November 2005  
(as set out on pages 464 – 467 of the Council Minute Book 11 January 2006)
- (ii) Environment Scrutiny Panel held 29 November 2005  
(as set out on pages 468 – 470 of the Council Minute Book 11 January 2006)
- (iii) Local Economy Scrutiny Panel held 30 November 2005  
(as set out on pages 471 – 476 of the Council Minute Book 11 January 2006)
- (iv) Resources Scrutiny Panel held 7 December 2005  
(as set out on pages 506 – 508 of the Council Minute Book 11 January 2006)

The City Secretary and Solicitor advised that the minutes of the above Scrutiny Panels were also to be considered at the meeting of Cabinet on 18 January 2006.

During consideration of the minutes of the Resources Scrutiny Panel, The Director of Finance advised that an all Member training session on the operation of the Council's Benefits Service was to be held immediately before the next meeting of the Panel on 31 January 2006.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Social Issues Scrutiny Panel held 28 November 2005, Environment Scrutiny Panel held 29 November 2005, Local Economy Scrutiny Panel held 30 November 2005, and Resources Scrutiny Panel held 7 December 2005, be received.

679. **CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS UNDER THE COMMITTEE'S POWERS OF CALL-IN**

- (i) **DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) LAND TO THE REAR OF 4-10 GREAT FIELD ROAD, WEEKE (LESS EXEMPT APPENDIX 2)**  
(Report CAB1158 and Report PS215 Extract of Minutes (less Exempt Minute refers))

The Committee noted that Cabinet had approved the proposals as set out, at its meeting on 14 December 2005.

In supporting Cabinet's decision to dispose of the freehold interest of the land to the Atlantic Housing Group, the Director of Communities was requested to approach the organisation to ensure that a gated access be provided from the site to the allotment to the rear.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of the meeting of Cabinet held on 14 December 2005 to approve the disposal of the freehold interest of the land to the rear of 4-10 Great Field Road, Weeke to the Atlantic Housing Group at a nominal consideration, be not called-in for review.

680. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT PS216 REFERS), JANUARY 2006 FORWARD PLAN AND ITEMS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme and Forward Plan for January 2006 be noted.

681. **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>
682	Depot Services Contract – Monitoring & Performance Update	) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the authority). (Para 7 to Schedule 12A refers).
683.1	Disposal of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Land to the rear of 4-10 Great Field Road, Weeke (Exempt Appendix 2)	) 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).
685.1	Extract of Minutes of Cabinet (Exempt Minute – 80-82 Sussex Street)	)
627	Exempt Minutes of the previous meeting	) Information relating to the financial or



	held on 5 December	)	business affairs of any
	2005 – Silver Hill	)	particular person (other
	Development –	)	than the authority).
	Milestones Report	)	(Para 7 to Schedule
		)	12A refers).
684 & 686	Exempt Minutes of	)	Any terms proposed or
	the previous meeting	)	to be proposed by or to
	held on 12 December	)	the authority in the
	2005 – Silver Hill	)	course of negotiations
	Development –	)	for a contract for the
	Landowners Approval	)	acquisition or disposal
	(Exempt Appendix 3)	)	of property or the
		)	supply of goods or
		)	services. (Para 9 to
		)	Schedule 12A refers).
		)	
		)	Any instructions to
		)	counsel and any
		)	opinion of counsel
		)	(whether or not in
		)	connection with any
		)	proceedings) and any
		)	advice received,
		)	information obtained or
		)	action to be taken in
		)	connection with:-
		)	(a) any legal
		)	proceedings by or
		)	against the authority, or
		)	(b) the determination
		)	of any matter affecting
		)	the authority,
		)	(whether, in either case,
		)	proceedings have been
		)	commenced or are in
		)	contemplation).
		)	(Para 12 to Schedule
		)	12A refers).

682. **DEPOT SERVICES CONTRACT – MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE**

(Report PS217 refers)

The Committee noted that the report was also to be considered by Cabinet at its meeting to be held on 18 January 2006.

It was agreed that to assist Members in their consideration of the matters, improvements to graphical representation of performance should be made where possible.

RESOLVED:

1. That performance information as set out in the report be noted.
2. That six monthly performance reports be now produced, commencing at the meeting of the Committee on 5 June 2006.

683. **CONSIDERATION OF ITEMS UNDER THE COMMITTEE'S POWERS OF CALL-IN**

- (i) **DISPOSAL OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) LAND TO THE REAR OF 4-10 GREAT FIELD ROAD, WEEKE, WINCHESTER (EXEMPT APPENDIX 2)**  
(Report CAB1158 refers)

Members noted the information contained within the Exempt Appendix which set out the financial details of the proposed disposal of land.

RESOLVED:

That the information contained in Exempt Appendix 2 to the Report be noted.

- (ii) **80-82 SUSSEX STREET, WINCHESTER**  
(Report CAB1175 and Report PS215 Extract of Minutes refers)

The Committee noted that Cabinet had approved the proposals as set out at its meeting on 14 December 2005.

In respect of this item, Councillor Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest as he was a Member of the Board of the Registered Housing Association. He withdrew from the room during consideration of the item.

The Committee considered the above Report and decided not to call the matter in for review (detail in exempt minutes).

684. **EXEMPT MINUTES**

The Committee considered of the exempt minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 December 2005 that had considered a report on the Silver Hill Development Landowner's Approval (report CAB1179 refers) (detail in exempt minutes).

During discussion of the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2005 referring to the Silver Hill Development Landowner's Approval (report CAB1179 refers), Councillors Davies, Lipscomb and Mitchell withdrew from the meeting as they were members of the Planning Development Control Committee. They had been previously advised by the City Secretary and Solicitor that it would not be appropriate for them to be present if they were to be involved in the determination of the Silver Hill planning application.

RESOLVED:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 December be approved and adopted

The meeting commenced at 6.35pm and concluded at 9.00pm.