

RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL

6 December 2006

Attendance:

Councillors:

Macmillan (Chairman)
Wright (Acting Chairman in the Chair) (P)

Anthony (P)
Clohosey
Cooper (P)
de Peyer
Goodall
Hiscock (P)

Learney (P)
Maynard (P)
Ruffell (P)
Worrall

Deputy Members:

Councillor Love (Standing Deputy for Councillor Clohosey)
Cllr Rees (Standing Deputy for Councillor de Peyer)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Allgood (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Macmillan, Clohosey, de Peyer, Goodall and Worrall.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

RESOLVED:

That, in the absence of the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman (Councillors Macmillan and Clohosey), Councillor Wright be appointed as Chairman for this meeting.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Panel held on 25 October 2006 be approved and adopted.

4. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

5. **FINANCE AND RESOURCE PORTFOLIO – PROCUREMENT UPDATE**
(Report RE36 refers)

Councillor Allgood introduced the Report and explained that it had been requested at the previous meeting of the Panel, during its consideration of the second quarter performance monitoring report relating to financial issues (Report RE31 refers).

In response to questions, the Panel noted that new wheelie bins (which met the Council's quality requirements) had been purchased through the consortium and savings had been achieved as a result. It was further noted that the Council's energy requirements were aggregated with the County Council's purchasing arrangements.

In reply to a Member's concerns, the Chief Executive confirmed that more work had yet to be done to ensure that the commitments given in the Procurement Strategy to disability and equalities issues were translated into practice. A Member also raised concerns about the slow introduction of the Hampshire Marketplace system. The Chief Executive explained that the difficulty of integration of the Marketplace system with different Councils' finance systems was delaying its implementation. However, savings through consortium purchases were more easily identified through the work being undertaken on Marketplace.

The Panel considered the opportunities for future savings identified in the Report and suggested that increased joint working with other Local Authorities should be investigated further and more thoroughly. It was suggested that further consideration be given to the options for delivering the Council's print requirements. The Chief Executive explained that previous reviews had concluded that there were a number of advantages of the Service's current location in the Guildhall, including the speed in which it was able to print committee reports to meet statutory deadlines.

The Panel also noted that there had been successful joint working with the Police Authority, Fire & Rescue Service and the County Council, which had resulted in the annual information from each body (together with that from the City Council) being incorporated into one leaflet, which would be enclosed with Council Tax Demands.

Members suggested that there was scope to achieve savings through reducing the amount, quality (in terms of the coloured paper used) and postage of printed Committee reports. Whilst it was noted that there were sustainability and practical reasons associated with the type of paper used by the Council, the City Secretary and Solicitor welcomed any further suggestions from Members that could lead to savings in the paper circulation of documents. He indicated that he would review the costs of the type of paper used for Committee reports, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.

At the conclusion of debate, the Panel acknowledged the potential scope for further savings through more joint procurement initiatives which, it suggested, the Council should be more actively pursuing and the Chief Executive assured the Panel that this was being done. In agreeing with these sentiments, Councillor Allgood informed the Panel that the Leader was organising a meeting with the Leaders of neighbouring Local Authorities to pursue this issue.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

6. **FINANCE AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO – HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTORATE - EXTRACT OF MINUTES OF PERSONNEL COMMITTEE HELD 13 NOVEMBER 2006 - SECOND QUARTER 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

(Report RE35 refers)

The Chief Executive explained that the detailed performance monitoring information regarding the Human Resources Division (Report PER108 refers) was considered by the Personnel Committee at its meeting held on 13 November 2006.

In noting the discussion at Personnel Committee, the Panel similarly gave its support to training of Members on the use of the Selima system, but accepted that paper copies of Members' monthly allowances payslips should still be available to those Members who preferred this option. The Panel also suggested that Members' expense forms could be returned electronically, but the City Secretary and Solicitor explained that probity guidelines still required a signature on the forms, which could be completed on the templates available for downloading, and that their submission on a monthly (rather than annual basis) meant that they could be more easily verified.

RESOLVED:

That the Report be noted.

7. **DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2007 ONWARDS**

(Report RE34 refers)

Councillor Allgood introduced the Report and highlighted the financial constraints the Council faced in the preparation of the 2006/07 Budget. With this in mind, he asked the Panel to consider the priorities set out in the Appendix of the Report and requested that they recommend any further savings.

During discussion, the Panel noted that Line R36 referred to a £1 million capital programme to re-roof the swimming pool at the River Park Leisure Centre and, subject to a condition survey in 2007, it was likely that these works would be carried out at the end of the current contract in 2011.

Councillor Allgood also explained that the savings identified at Line R14 (Organisational Development) were at an early stage of consultation and were therefore an estimate.

The Panel noted that, whilst not in this Report, an additional £40,000 for property survey costs (CAB1371 refers) would be included in subsequent budget papers. Councillor Allgood confirmed that maintenance of the Council's existing properties took priority over the building of any new projects. The Director of Communities added that a programme of works for the Meadowside Leisure Centre, which included floor strengthening, was scheduled as a capital growth bid for 2009/10.

In response to questions, the City Secretary and Solicitor explained that outline costs of the proposed office moves would be publicly available in a future report to Cabinet.

With regard to the Knowle Community Building, the Panel noted that the Council was in negotiations with both the Parish Council and developer on the scale of the project and its future management.

During debate, the Panel also discussed the Cash Office, the proposed outdoor sports centre at Bar End and the need to accelerate business process reviews.

At the conclusion of debate, the Panel asked Cabinet to consider moving the Winchester Centre Rent Review (Line R8) from a “desirable” to a “priority” growth bid, in recognition of the benefits provided to the local community by the organisations that operated from the Centre.

RESOLVED:

1. That Cabinet be recommended that the relative priorities for the budget, as set out in the Report be agreed, subject to the inclusion of R8 (Winchester Centre Rent Review) as a priority growth bid.

2. That Cabinet be informed that the Panel was unable to identify any further savings.

8. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**
(Report PS259 refers)

The Chief Executive updated the Panel on the progress of the E-Government Informal Scrutiny Group and indicated that a date for report back was due to be considered at its next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda and as extracted from Report PS246, be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.35pm.

Chairman