

**RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL****18 November 2009****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Wright (Chairman) (P)

Anthony  
Henry (P)  
Higgins (P)  
Huxstep (P)  
Jeffs (P)Learney (P)  
Sanders (P)  
Mitchell (P)  
Thompson  
Verney (P)**Deputy Members in attendance:**

Councillor Humby (Standing Deputy for Councillor Anthony)

Councillor Maynard (Standing Deputy for Councillor Thompson)

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

Councillor Allgood (Portfolio Holder for Finance and Efficiency)

Councillor Godfrey (Portfolio Holder for Performance and Organisational  
Development)**1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Councillors Allgood and Godfrey declared personal and prejudicial interests due to their involvement as Cabinet Members in actions taken or proposed in Reports RE90, CAB 1922 and CAB1923 below.

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

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 July 2009 be approved and adopted.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no comments made or statements received.

3. **EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE COUNCIL – QUARTER 2  
2009/10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE**  
(Report RE90 refers)

The Panel noted that the above report had been prepared in the new 'exceptions' format, meaning that the only actions set out were those which had been highlighted by the Covalent Management System as being overdue. Also included in the report, at the request of Principal Scrutiny Committee, were details of the outstanding high risk audit actions. Any areas of concern identified by Members would be investigated and the outcome reported back.

Regarding the Silver Hill re-development, a Member drew attention to the future location of St Clements surgery, where there was some public concern that it may follow the Friarsgate surgery in re-locating away from the city centre. Although comments were reported from a senior source at St Clements that this would not be the case, it was agreed that formal confirmation of the current position should be sought.

Several Members noted some lack of clarity and inconsistency with the way in which milestones and the percentage of progress against targets had been recorded in the report. It was agreed that officers should be reminded to follow the same methodology when entering data into the Covalent system.

The meeting was pleased to note the improved business performance of the Guildhall, especially in the current economic climate. It was agreed that the Guildhall Manager and his team should be congratulated on their achievements.

With regard to the grouping of minor maintenance work to save money (page 29), the Panel supported the view that this should be investigated thoroughly, especially with the retendering exercise for the Depot Services contracts about to commence. The checking regime for electrical equipment (pages 31/32) also needed to be pursued, as there appeared simple measures which could be taken to reduce risks. On the question of health and safety generally, Councillor Godfrey assured the meeting that this was taken very seriously and that the recent comments of Principal Scrutiny Committee on the matter had been noted.

**RESOLVED:**

That, subject to the comments set out above, the performance information and report cards, together with the progress being made against the high risk audit actions, be noted.

4. **MEMBERS SURVEY 2009**  
(Report RE89 refers)

The Head of Democratic Services explained that the survey was undertaken in May 2009 and 35 Members had completed questionnaires. As this represented a 61% response rate, the results could be treated as statistically significant and there were a number of interesting results for Members to consider. Those results had already been circulated to the Corporate Management Team and Senior Officers Group, as the findings were of relevance to all service areas.

With regard to scrutiny, Members agreed that the results highlighted a continuing concern that this function remained an area where further improvements were required. It was noted that the Corporate Management Team would be reviewing the situation with the scrutiny panel chairmen shortly. Some Members referred to the recent scrutiny training and suggested that the different approaches to this work, as explained by the external facilitator, should be considered as part of that review.

Another theme emerging from the survey was the need to keep Ward Members informed of local issues, for example keeping them updated on relevant negotiations between officers and parish councils. The Head of Democratic Services responded that the Members Charter contained a 'Think Ward Member' section, which explained that officers were asked to keep Members informed (where appropriate) about local issues and that this could often be achieved by a simple copy e mail. He agreed to request the Senior Managers Group to revisit the practices within their respective Divisions to ensure that, as far as possible, the need for officers to inform or update Ward Members became an automatic consideration as part of their work.

During further discussion, comments were made about the low satisfaction scores for the contribution which full Council meetings made to the work of the Authority, and with regard to the chairing of meetings. There was also disappointment that 22 Members had not completed the survey.

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the above comments, the results of the Members Survey 2009 be received and noted.

5. **CORPORATE BUSINESS PLAN 2010-2015 - CONSULTATION DRAFT**  
(Report CAB1922 refers)

Councillor Allgood reported that, at the meeting of Principal Scrutiny Committee on 16 November 2009, it had been noted that the policies relating to 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'Efficient and Effective Council' were not easily measurable in the context of outcomes, and that perhaps they would be better expressed as themes. Therefore, work on this point would continue as part of the community strategy review during 2010.

RESOLVED:

That no comments be made to Cabinet on the proposed wording of the Corporate Business Plan 2010-2015

6. **GENERAL FUND BUDGET CONSULTATION 2010/11**  
(Report CAB1923 refers)

The Panel considered the report in detail and discussed a number of issues.

With regard to the Council's future relationship with South East Employers, Councillor Godfrey confirmed that there was scope to provide that organisation with assistance for its future accommodation and administrative needs, and that discussions were continuing.

At the Chairman's request, circulated at the meeting were the final figures for car park income for 2008/09; it had not been possible to produce figures for the current year in time for the meeting. Councillor Allgood explained that, whilst some of the percentage increases to car park charges may appear high, this was partly due to the need to make the new fees convenient to the public in terms of the coins required to pay. It was noted that the new charges would take effect from 1 January 2010, but that negotiations with certain major employers about discounted parking for their employees using park and ride were ongoing.

One Member put forward a voluntary pay reduction by staff and deferred pension contributions as possible ways to help reduce the budget deficit. Councillor Godfrey responded that it would be unlawful to interfere with pensions in the way suggested. However, a number of measures such as offering staff the opportunity for reduced hours, unpaid career breaks etc were being promoted. It must also be remembered that reductions in staff would impact on the levels of work that could be undertaken in the future.

With regard to the cost of postage, some Members urged greater use of TNT, especially as the first class 'next day' service by Royal Mail appeared to be failing in many areas. The Head of Customer Services explained that nearly half of all mail was sent using TNT, but he agreed to give further consideration to the matter.

A Member drew attention to the respective parish and town contributions to funding public conveniences and requested clarification of the figures set out in the report. The Head of Finance agreed to provide the necessary information to the next meeting of the Winchester Town Forum.

Attention was drawn to the growth bid for two new finance staff and the assurances given at the last restructure of the Finance Division, that the staff levels agreed at that time would be adequate for the future. Councillor Allgood explained that the need for one post was highlighted by the External Auditor and the other post related to implementation of the new finance system, which would see efficiency improvements.

Finally, the question of IT support costs was raised and whether the Council would be investigating Open Source as a cheaper alternative. Councillor Godfrey confirmed that some work had been undertaken but progress was unlikely to be swift.

**RESOLVED:**

That no comments be made to Cabinet on the initial options for 2010/11 budget savings and growth.

10. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME (REPORT PS382 REFERS) AND MATTERS ARISING**

RESOLVED:

That, subject to removal of the Guildhall Informal Scrutiny Group (as Cabinet had now appointed a Guildhall Member/Officer Working Group to monitor progress of the refurbishment contract) the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda and as extracted from Report PS382, be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.45pm

Chairman