

CABINET MEMBER FOR RESOURCES DECISION MEETING

RECORD OF DECISIONS taken by the Cabinet Member for Resources, Councillor Hugh Mason, at his decision meeting held on Thursday 21 October 2010 at 8.45am in the Guildhall, Portsmouth.

Opposition Spokespersons Councillor Donna Jones (Conservative) and David Horne (Labour) were also present.

Officers present were Mandy Lindley, Third Sector Partnerships and Commissioning Manager, Dave Adams, Customer, Community and Democratic Services and Sue Page, Finance Manager.

Councillor Hugh Mason welcomed Opposition Spokespersons and officers to the meeting.

15 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

There were no apologies for absence.

16 Declaration of Members' Interests (AI 2)

There were no prejudicial declarations of interest.

17 Monitoring of the First Quarter 2010/11 Revenue Cash Limits and Capital Programme

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Finance Manager outlined the report and said that the forecast outturn for the Portfolio compared to the cash limit indicated a net overspend of £15,706. Because windfall budgets are largely out of the control of budget managers, overspends that cannot be absorbed within the Portfolio budget are funded corporately.

The main areas of variance were:-

Legal Services – forecast overspend of £192,800

Spinnaker Tower – forecast overspend of £80k (reduction in receipts coming to PCC)

Benefits - forecast overspend £140,053

Democratic Representation and Management – forecast overspend of £72,751

Corporate Management – forecast overspend of £55,791

Councillor Hugh Mason expressed concern in relation to the Democratic, Representation and Management budget in that the £23k overspend is greater than the budget allocated. Dave Adams said that the most likely cause was that the budget allocated was not sufficient. It had been reduced since the previous year. In addition, the total members allowances as agreed by the Independent Remuneration Panel had not been funded. The service was therefore having to cover the increase from other areas, but although this had been possible to do this year, it would be problematic next year. This is an ongoing problem and would only be resolved if there were fewer portfolios in future or if the budget was increased. One of the problems is that the budget is decided in February but the portfolios are decided in May so there is a disconnect between the two.

With regard to the Legal Services' overspend, in response to a query from Councillor Jones, Mr Michael Lawther, City Solicitor, said that huge savings had in fact been made for the Council (around £700k) but that other services "owed" money for work done. This was unlikely to be recovered because Legal Services had not collected the money up front and had not entered into formal agreements with service heads. The City Solicitor said that opportunities for making large savings for PCC would be likely to diminish next year. In response to a query from Councillor Jones, the City Solicitor confirmed that Strategic Directors Board would eventually be involved regarding which services owe money.

In response to a question from Councillor Horne, the City Solicitor explained that it was still difficult to recruit high quality litigators as the public sector lags behind the private sector. It is also difficult when services cannot plan for the future and are only able to offer temporary positions. Legal Services are trying to combat this by offering longer fixed term contracts.

With regard to the Spinnaker Tower, Councillor Mason was advised that the director of Heritage is looking at schemes to boost visitor numbers.

With regard to the Capital Programme, the Cabinet Member was advised that there is a forecast "In year" underspend of £4,246,400. Details of the variations by scheme are included in Appendix B of the report. The capital programme is currently under review and any savings identified will be returned to the corporate centre to be allocated to other schemes in accordance with the City Council's capital priorities.

DECISION that the Cabinet Member

(1) Noted the report

(2) agreed that the overspends on the capital schemes for the Eastney Pumping Station façade works (£18,000) and the Buckland Community Centre boiler (£10,000) be met from an equivalent transfer from the Landlord's Maintenance revenue budget in 2010/11.

18 Portsmouth Partnership Improvement Plan Voluntary and Community Sector

Mandy Lindley, Third Sector Partnerships and Commissioning Manager, outlined the report and said that this was not in fact a key decision. The framework is being brought back to the meeting following consultation. She explained that the track changes have been left in the document to make it clear where changes have been made.

DECISIONS that the Cabinet Member for Resources:

- (1) Approved the voluntary and community sector framework (appendix 1) on behalf of PCC**
- (2) Noted the verbal update on changes at Community First for Portsmouth**
- (3) Advised the Third Sector Partnerships and Commissioning Manager to continue with the planned work and report back in six months with representatives of the leadership group.**

19 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was scheduled for 25 November 2010.

The date of the next meeting scheduled for 7 October 2010 would be changed to allow for the 12-week consultation period in respect of the draft Voluntary and Community Sector framework to be completed.

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Councillor Hugh Mason
Cabinet Member for Resources

VJP/CB
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