

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 3 February at 9.30am in the Guildhall, Portsmouth. Opposition spokespersons Councillors David Horne (Labour) and Donna Jones (Conservative) were also present.

Councillor Hugh Mason welcomed opposition spokespersons and officers to the meeting.

1. Declarations of members' interests (AI 1)

There were no prejudicial declarations of interest.

2. Voluntary and Community Sector (Verbal Update) (AI 2)

Ms Mandy Lindley, Third Sector Partnerships and Commissioning Manager, explained that she had not brought a written report today but that she and Mr John Palmer, the new Chief Executive of Community First, would provide a verbal update.

Ms Lindley said that the Partnership Improvement Programme (PIP) and the action plan will mainly focus on commissioning relationships with the voluntary sector. The process for improving commissioning had begun with a session for PCCS Voluntary Community Sector commissioning network facilitated by Learning and Development with the aim being for all departments to engage in the same way with the Voluntary Sector. Ms Lindley explained that possible savings may be achievable where departments are working with the same organisations. Ms Lindley said she would share the work plan at the next appropriate meeting.

Ms Lindley said that she was looking at developing areas where the voluntary sector could perhaps help with public sector work – for example in the areas of Youth Services, and also recycling opportunities and matters concerning the environment.

The Head of Customer Community and Democratic Services said that it was apparent that many services are using the Voluntary Sector but that currently this is not well coordinated. Efficiencies could be achieved if everything came through one body rather than individual services making decisions in isolation.

Ms Lindley said that many funding streams are drying up and there is a need to look at doing things differently. For example in the grants report, the same names appear as recipients and there needs to be a more comprehensive and competitive process to spread the grants wider. If commissioning was done in a coordinated way, economies of scale would ensure that more could be achieved for less money.

Mr John Palmer, the new Chief Executive of Community First was then invited to talk about initiatives that were being put in place. He explained that his aim was to re position Community First. Cuts being made by PCC have been a difficult but interesting driver. Mr Palmer explained that Community First was undergoing internal re structuring. A major upgrade to the website and database is underway and this will be an ongoing process.

Community First has communicated with those communities whose funding had been cut in the budget. In addition a telephone helpline is going to be launched.

Better co ordination has been implemented with regard to commissioning. Both locally and nationally the likelihood is that there will be a smaller number of larger value contracts. Consequently, a bidding consortium is being developed as a member owned vehicle with the ability to develop enough expertise to cope with big contracts. Around 8 organisations are involved with putting together the consortium with advice from Neil Coulson, who has worked successfully to support the development of consortia elsewhere in the country. The consortium may get involved in tendering or business development. Community First's remit is to support commissioning but also business development. Community First is there to advise, inform, support and guide the voluntary sector.

Mr Palmer also explained that there was a huge proliferation of groups in the voluntary sector. His aim was to work with those in the sector to reform and simplify the structures currently in place and wants Community First to be the business link between the community and voluntary sectors. The intention was to form a core team and to go out to those in the voluntary and community sectors with a view to being receptive to their different needs.

In response to questions, Mr Palmer said that there was not going to be a joining fee for the consortium at first and that there was an issue around how to fund the consortium for the first 3 to 6 months. He said there was a need for those wishing to participate in the consortium to make a commitment to it so that its viability could be tested. The consortium had to be self sustaining.

The PIP Plan will be progressed further initially by Third Sector Leadership Group and in due course the replacement vehicle following the new structure for Voluntary and Community Sector engagement.

The Cabinet Member for Resources agreed to receive regular updates on the voluntary and community sector.

3. Monitoring of the Third Quarter 2010/11 Revenue Cash Limits and Capital Programme (AI 3)

(TAKE IN REPORT BY STRATEGIC DIRECTOR AND s151 OFFICER)

Sue Page, Financial Services, outlined the report and explained that it compared the forecast revenue outturn 2010/11 with the cash limited budget for that year and the forecast year and the forecast capital expenditure with the approved capital programme and provides information to enable an understanding of the reasons for variances.

Ms Page said that the forecast outturn for the Portfolio compared to the cash limit indicated a net underspend of £15,350. She explained that this sum included a forecast under-recovery of income of £32,000 from Land Charges and a forecast overspend of £56,200 on Housing Benefits. These budgets are deemed to be 'windfall' which means that they are largely out of the control of budget managers. Savings on windfall budgets accrue to the corporate centre. Overspendings on windfall budgets that cannot be absorbed within the Portfolio budget are funded corporately. The portfolio is

currently forecasting a net underspend of £15,350 after absorbing these windfall overspends.

Ms Page outlined the main areas of variance which included; vacancies in Trade Union secondments, additional employee costs in Legal Services, staff vacancies and savings in non staff costs on the AMS business account and a reduction in PCC's share of revenue from the Spinnaker Tower owing to a lower footfall.

With regard to the Capital Programme, Ms Page explained that the updated capital monitoring statement was attached at Appendix B.

DECISIONS:

DECISION that the Cabinet Member noted the report.

4. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 24 March at 8.45am in Conference Room A.

The meeting concluded at 10.00am.

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Councillor Hugh Mason
Cabinet Member for Resources