

SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Scrutiny Management Panel held on Monday 8 March 2010 at 9.30 am in the Executive Meeting Room, Floor 3, The Guildhall, Portsmouth.

(NB: These minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting, which can be viewed at www.portsmouth.gov.uk)

Present

Councillors Les Stevens (Chair)
Cheryl Buggy
Frank Jonas
Andy Fraser (Deputising for Paula Riches)
Jim Patey
Mike Park (Deputising for Malcolm Hey)
Terry Henderson
David Fuller (till 10:52)

Lee Hunt, Executive member for Culture & Leisure (till 10:33)
Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Leader of the Council (till 09:38)

Officers

Michael Lawther, City Solicitor
Stewart Agland, Local Democracy Manager
Louise Wilders, head of customer, communications & democratic services
Stephen Todd, Head of Central HR services

8 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paula Riches and Malcolm Hey

9 Declarations of interest (AI 2)

Councillor Lee Hunt declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as he was the executive member involved in taking the decision, which is subject to the call-in (AI4).

Councillor Mike Park declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in AI6 as his daughter works for Portsmouth City Council.

Councillor David Fuller declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in AI6 as he has a friend who works in IT for Portsmouth City Council

10 Minutes from the Meeting of 18 February 2010 (AI3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Scrutiny Management Panel meeting held on 18 February 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to the declarations of interest being amended to include the fact that Cllr Andy Fraser declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in relation to AI4 as he has property in Portsmouth and Cllr Frank Jonas declaration of interest to be amended as he is not a landlord affected by AI4 as previously stated.

11 Deputations from the public under Standing Order No 24

One deputation was heard from Mr David Baynes in favour of

- The New Southsea Library, Cultural Centre and Contact Centre proposal

One deputation against was heard from Mr Geoff Harker against

- The New Southsea Library, Cultural Centre and Contact Centre proposal

12 Southsea Library and Contact Centre – new premises at Palmerston Road Southsea – call in of decisions taken by the Cabinet at its meeting on 8 February (AI 4)

Prior to the call-in being heard, the chairman of Scrutiny Management Panel sought the agreement of the panel to adopt the call-in process described in the protocol supplied by the City Solicitor. This was agreed by the panel and the meeting was conducted in accordance with the protocol supplied to members at the meeting.

Councillor Wemyss outlined his reasons for call-in of the decision in relation to the Southsea Library and Contact Centre. Cllr Wemyss stated that whilst he was not completely opposed to the library, he was concerned as he felt that the traders of Southsea had not been properly consulted and that the projected footfall figures used had dropped 25% which he felt would have a substantial difference in the projected figures.

It was also felt that the report to Culture & Leisure meeting of 4 March 2010 did not show any community engagement or consultation. It was felt that the public had not been properly consulted, other than reading about the proposals in the press and that there were other suitable locations elsewhere in the city that did not appear to have been considered.

Councillor Hunt then addressed the panel as the Executive member for Culture & Leisure and sought to understand what it was that made members feel the decision was taken without adequate information.

Councillor Hunt gave an overview of the decision of the executive and the rationale behind the proposal for the Library and Contact Centre in Southsea.

In response to questions, Councillor Hunt stated that he was satisfied that adequate consultation had taken place prior to the decision being made.

The panel were addressed by the City Solicitor to clarify whether they were satisfied that Cllr Hunt and his colleagues on the executive had adequate information to reach their decision.

A proposal from Councillor Park seconded by Councillor Henderson was put to the panel, which stated, "we feel the report is weak with respect to financial considerations and consultation and should be referred back to cabinet for reconsideration". A vote was taken with two members voting for the proposal and four voting against.

A further proposal was put forward to the panel by Councillor Fuller, seconded by Councillor Buggy, which stated, "we feel that the decision taken by the executive is sound and should be upheld". A vote was taken with four members voting in favour of the proposal, there were no votes against.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet decision taken on 8th February 2010 in relation to the proposed New Library, Cultural Centre and Contact Centre in Southsea is upheld and will not be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

13 Website manager (AI 5)

At the SMP meeting in February, the panel expressed concern about the departure of the Website Manager after such a short time in post and as a result of this invited the head of customer communications and democratic services to address the panel on this matter.

The head of customer, communications and democratic services stated that:

- The appointment was a joint recruitment post to look at the corporate website
- Funding ran out in 2005 for website improvements
- There is a lack of funding and a lack of resources
- Corporate website is due to be scrutinised, this will really help to decide way forward with the website
- Functionality is now being addressed by the correct areas
- Interim arrangements are in place following the departure of the website manager
- It is anticipated that a new manager will be in place within 3-6 months
- The financial impact of recruitment and departure of the website manager cost circa £25k which included salary for the period of employment and during the period of employment, was responsible for compilation of the carers website and landlords accreditation scheme
- The website manager provided value for money during their time with PCC
- The communications and information services teams have been pulled together and a web developer needs to be brought in to deal with core issues with the current system as search engines and hardware have not been updated in the past 6 years
- It will take circa £200k to put in place what is known will work

14 **Sickness absence monitoring (AI 6)**

At the SMP meeting in February, the panel expressed concern about the level of stress related sickness absence and what was being done by the authority to deal with this. Stephen Todd, Head of Central HR Services was invited to provide the panel with an update.

[TAKE IN REPORT]

The panel heard that;

- During 2005/06 the authority undertook work with the Health & Safety Executive to review stress related sickness absence
- It was assessed that there was a good policy in place although it was widely unknown
- Corporate well being group has been set up
- Average days per employee sickness absence has reduced from 11.3 to 9.9 days in less than two years
- 34% of referrals to Occupational Health during June-Sept 2009 were for Mental Health issues, conversely 29% were for muscular skeletal
- It is not known how much employee stress is unrelated to work
- A fast track referral process exists for mental health issues
- Two training courses exist, one for all staff and one for managers to ensure their increased awareness of well being issues
- Free counselling service available to all staff
- PCC stopped using comparator studies as their usefulness was questionable and for PCC we recognised that our levels of sickness absence were too high irrespective of how they compared to other authorities.
- The performance indicator figure of 12.2% average sickness absence per employee that was reported to Governance & Audit will be clarified and the result reported back to SMP at their next meeting

RESOLVED that the Head of Central HR Services advise the Scrutiny Management Panel of the current average sickness absence per employee, to clarify the discrepancy in figures noted by the panel.

15 **Date of next meeting (AI 7)**

The next scheduled meeting will take place on Thursday 3 June 2010 at 9.30 a.m. in the Executive Meeting Room, Floor 3, The Guildhall, Portsmouth. This is subject to the forthcoming general election being held before this date.

Meeting concluded at 11.20 a.m.

Chairman.....

AQ
10/03/10