

## **SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Scrutiny Management Panel held on 4 February 2011 at 9.00 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](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk))

### **Present**

Councillors Lynne Stagg (Appointed Chair for the meeting)  
Peter Eddis  
Rob Wood  
Mike Park

### **Officers**

Michael Lawther, City Solicitor & Strategic Director  
Roger Ching, Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer  
Val Lane, Head of Financial Services  
Chris Ward, Accountancy Manager  
Stewart Agland, Local Democracy Manager  
Jane Tume, PFI Commercial Manager  
Anthony Quinn, Senior Local Democracy Officer

### **Election of Chair**

The Chair of Scrutiny Management Panel was unable to attend the meeting and the vice-chair also submitted their apologies. In the absence of a chair for the meeting, the Local Democracy Officer sought nominations for the election of a chair for this meeting. Cllr Wood nominated Cllr Stagg to act as Chair for this meeting, which was seconded by Cllr Eddis. Councillor Stagg took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

#### **1 Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jim Patey, Caroline Scott, Cheryl Buggy and James Williams

#### **2 Declarations of interest (AI 2)**

Cllr Park declared a personal and prejudicial interest in AI4 as his daughter works for one of the Portsmouth City Council services, which has been identified for redundancies.

Cllr Wood declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in AI4 as his daughter works for Motiv8.

#### **3 Minutes from the Meeting of 16 December 2010 (AI3)**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Scrutiny Management Panel meeting held on 16 December 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

The City Solicitor sought the consent of the acting chair to make an apology to Mr Thompson, a member of the public, for an unsubstantiated comment that was attributed to Mr Thompson in a previous scrutiny report and subsequent report submitted to Cabinet. The City Solicitor has sent a full letter of apology to Mr Thompson.

#### **4 Budget 2011/12 (AI 4)**

Having declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, Cllr Park left the meeting at 09:08 hrs.

[TAKE IN BUDGET]

The Accountancy Manager gave a presentation to the panel on the administration's proposed budget.

[TAKE IN PRESENTATION]

The panel were reminded that the value of the MTRS was a decision taken by members last September and that advice from actuaries regarding pensions was that there was no need to increase employer's contributions on order to satisfy current liabilities.

The budget is based on a 2 year settlement as opposed to a four year settlement. Central government have removed the ring-fencing from the bulk of grants to enable the money to be spent on anything. The grants have been reduced from 90 down to 10 and all rolled in together. Whilst there are bonus payments available for building affordable housing, there is uncertainty beyond 2 years.

The City Council are confident of collecting 98.5% of Council Tax during the 2011/12 financial year which is an increase from 98.3% last year.

The budget cycle was informed by contributions from officer proposals, public proposals and member proposals.

There is a £1.8m overspend in Looked After Children provision and this is likely to be ongoing in support of the Council's priority of protecting vulnerable children.

Using band D Council Tax is not a good indicator for Portsmouth as 83% of properties are in bands A, B & C.

There is a need to replenish the MTRS for the future, which could be through "spend to save" or "redundancy costs". The authority can only use the reserves once and there is concern that the reserves are set too low.

In respect of capital projects, the panel heard that officers go back through the existing programme and re-prioritise the projects to release money for other projects and that there is a revenue reserve for capital projects.

**RESOLVED** that the administration's proposed budget for 2011/12 be

**noted.**

## **5 Monitoring of previous scrutiny reviews (AI 5)**

Cllr Park re-joined the meeting at 10:08 hrs.

The panel received written updates on the implementation of previous scrutiny reviews including, “Attainment & Achievement”, “Neighbour Nuisance”, “Seafront” and Colas reviews.

[TAKE IN REPORT]

The panel were advised that a report on the outcomes from the Twinning review is scheduled to be submitted to Cabinet in March.

The panel noted the updates from the; “Attainment & Achievement”, “Neighbour Nuisance” and “Seafront” reviews. The panel also wanted to extend their thanks to the Seafront Manager for the improvements that have been made to the seafront thus far.

The panel received an update from Portsmouth City Council’s PFI Commercial Manager in respect of the recommendations from the Colas review.

The panel expressed their concerns that the production of a guideline document on Consultation & Communication has not yet been produced and have asked that an update be brought to a future meeting of SMP.

The panel challenged whether the Arboriculture Operational Plan was working well and if suitable replacements were being used when replacing damaged or diseased trees.

The panel were advised that an update from recommendation 3 is due to be presented to Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Scrutiny in the next municipal year to show the outcomes of the Value for Money (VfM) review. The initial outcome noted that PCC didn’t get as much as they had expected and were working with the Department for Transport (DfT) to try and release savings from the contract.

In respect of recommendations 4 & 5, the panel heard that it was not practicable to use stronger barriers as there are inherent Health & Safety risks to pedestrians and other road users as a result. It was acknowledged that using stronger sandbags to hold down signage was beneficial and should be encouraged to minimise risk. There are also ongoing meetings with the utility companies to prevent future problems.

The panel noted the progress of recommendations 6 & 7.

**RESOLVED that;**

- 1. The updates received in relation to Attainment & Achievement, Neighbour Nuisance and Seafront reviews be noted**
- 2. The panel thank the Seafront Manager for the improvements that have been made to date**
- 3. The panel receive an update in six months time in respect of the outcomes from the Twinning review**
- 4. That Transport & Street Management bring an update to a future meeting of SMP in the next municipal year to update them on the action points identified from the Colas review**

**6 Scrutiny Work Programme (AI6)**

The panel received an update on the current work programme, including the topics that have been carried over from previous municipal years.

[TAKE IN WORK PROGRAMME]

The panel questioned the validity of the outstanding topics on the scrutiny work programme given that some of them were suggested some time ago. Consequently, the panel agreed to remove the topics on the work programme that have not yet commenced and begin the new municipal year with an up to date priority based topic list.

**RESOLVED that;**

- 1. all items on the current scrutiny work programme that are not currently underway be removed from the work programme**
- 2. that members be invited to the next meeting of SMP, to identify priority topics for scrutiny in the forthcoming municipal year**

**7 Date of next meeting (AI7)**

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at 9.30 in Executive Meeting Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, The Guildhall

Meeting concluded at 11.30 a.m.

Chairman.....