

## **SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT PANEL**

MINUTES OF THE MEETING of the Scrutiny Management Panel held on 7 February 2012 at 4.30 pm in Executive Meeting Room, 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**

Councillor Michael Andrewes (Chair)  
Councillor Jim Patey (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Margaret Adair  
Councillor Peter Eddis  
Councillor David Fuller  
Councillor Caroline Scott  
Councillor Lee Mason  
Councillor Steve Wemyss  
Councillor James Williams

### **Officers**

Chris Ward, Head of Finance and s151 Officer  
Louise Wilders, Head of Customer, Community and Democratic Services  
Claire Green, Web Manager

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

There were no apologies for absence but Councillor Wemyss sent apologies that he would be late.

Councillor Fuller apologised that he may have to leave the meeting before it finished.

#### **2 Declarations of Members' Interests (AI 2)**

Councillor Wemyss declared two personal non prejudicial code of conduct interests in item 4 in that he lived near Derby House which was mentioned in the budget and also his Mother was in receipt of domiciliary care (although she does pay for it).

Councillor Wemyss also declared a personal non prejudicial interest in item 6 as he is employed by the NHS.

#### **3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 December 2011 (AI 3)**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Management Panel meeting held on 6 December 2011 were agreed.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2011 be confirmed and signed by the chair as a correct record.**

#### **4 Presentation by Head of Finance and s 151 Officer on the Budget 2012/13**

(TAKE IN PRESENTATION)

The Head of Finance and S151 officer gave the presentation which it was also intended to be given to full Council at the budget meeting. He explained that there were 2 budget reports which should be looked at as a package – the capital programme and the revenue programme.

He explained that the required savings over the next three years had had to be revised upwards. The overall aim was to try to protect core services and that the transformation programme was designed to deliver this.

The Head of Finance and S151 officer said that the revenue budget covered day to day expenditure such as salaries and the funding came mainly from government grants, business rates, council tax and fees charged for services. If these did not generate enough income, then the council has to draw on its reserves.

With regard to 2012/13, the £45m savings requirement is made up of £7m in the first year, £7m plus a further £8m in the second year and £7m plus £8m plus £8m in the third year.

He explained that the only service to receive a budget increase was Children and Education. All others had seen a reduction in funding. He said that the biggest savings had been in the resources portfolio.

With regard to the budget forecast, PCC was likely to face further reductions. There was a need to set minimum amounts to hold in reserves (MTRS Reserve) to cover such items as redundancy payments, spend to save schemes and feasibility studies.

The Head of Finance and S151 officer explained the Capital Programme with the help of the slide presentation and covered items of major expenditure such as on land, buildings and infrastructure. He listed the overall aims which were to kickstart regeneration in the city and to protect the vulnerable in society. The panel were advised about the proposed new capital schemes with the projected costs of each.

During discussion the following matters were clarified

- The s 151 officer said that holding £5.5m in the MTRS reserve was in his opinion adequate. He said that Southampton was holding £5m in their reserves. He said it was difficult to say whether the figure in PCC's MTRS reserve was generally higher or lower than in other authorities as the risks facing authorities were all different so direct comparisons could not be made.
- It was confirmed that there were many variables which could not be predicted – for example, if the general economy picks up, there will be a gain from eg business rates, but the opposite would be true if the economy worsens.

Following further discussion, members decided that they would not put forward anything to Cabinet and Council where the budget papers were next considered as they could make their views known then.

## **5 Information Report on plans for the development of the city council's web presence**

(TAKE IN REPORT)

The Head of Customer Community and Democratic Services explained that the council's website was launched in 2005 and although it has undergone changes since then, a much more fundamental change was now required partly to meet customer expectations and partly to achieve substantial efficiency savings by encouraging customers to engage with PCC through the web rather than using more costly channels.

The Head of Customer Community and Democratic Services went on to say that investment in the council's web presence to achieve savings is part of the customer management element of the transformation programme. Around £500k will be invested over three years in order to move between 20,000 and 30,000 customer contacts from more expensive channels such as face to face or telephone contact to the web. She also said that Appendix A to the report shows how the web will be developed.

During discussion the following points were made

- Members were keen to see the website made more user-friendly – for example members would like to be able to access the intranet from home.
- There is a proliferation of terms meaning the same thing eg rubbish, refuse, waste – need to recognise all these if searched for
- Members felt that work needs to be done to bring together the various different websites which are all PCC owned.
- Members would welcome a list of what is contained on the Intranet
- Members would like the website to be kept up to date.
- Members were advised that there were often surveys that were carried out via Flagship magazine or by setting up focus groups.

The Chair thanked The Head of CCDS and the ?? Manager for the update.

## **6 Verbal Updates on the work of each of the scrutiny panels**

### **Education Children and Young Persons Scrutiny Panel (ECYP)**

Councillor Wemyss as Chair of the panel explained that the review **“targeted support for children and young people who demonstrate behaviours that may put them at risk”** was unlikely to be completed by the end of the municipal year as the review was still in its early stages.

### **Traffic Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel (TECS)**

Councillor Caroline Scott, Chair of the Panel said that the review into “**How the council responds to the issues of surface water flooding in the city**” was progressing well and that the review was likely to be signed off by the end of the municipal year. The Chair said there was a need for continuity of membership of scrutiny panels in her view as her panel had reduced to four members during the course of the year. She said that the next topic the panel were likely to look at was air quality.

### **Economic Development Culture and Leisure Scrutiny Panel (EDCL)**

The panel was advised that the review into “**whether the resident workforce in Portsmouth has the requisite skills to satisfy the current and future needs of the city, its residents and local employers**” was expected to be signed off before the end of the Municipal Year and that it was progressing well and had generated much interest locally.

### **Housing and Social Care Scrutiny Panel (H&SC)**

Councillor Andrewes provided a quick overview of the topic chosen for review “**To consider the impact on the rented housing market of welfare reform proposals**” and said it was progressing well but was a complex topic and that the meetings were interesting and had involved some site visits for example to Central Point. The review was likely to be signed off before the end of the municipal year.

### **Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel (HOSP)**

The Chair of the Panel, Councillor Eddis, provided an update to the panel and said that the HOSP was not carrying out a review at present. It was keeping a close eye on vascular services and where these would be provided in future. He also explained that some streamlining of agenda items and the procedure at meetings was taking place.

## **7 Discussion on Matters Arising from the presentation received from the meeting of Scrutiny Management Panel at the 6 December meeting.**

The Chair of the Scrutiny Management Panel asked members to consider whether they had any comments on the matters covered by the Strategic Directors at the last meeting or any suggestions of topics for review arising from it.

## **8 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting is to be arranged.