

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
15 January 2013**

Present:

Councillor Philippa Broom (Chairman)
Councillor Joanne Sexton (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

A. Ayub	A.C. Harman	Miss D. Patel
R. D. Dunn	Mrs I. Napper	A.C. Patterson
M.P.C. Francis	Mrs C.E. Nichols	Mrs S. Webb
A.E. Friday		

Apologies: Councillors Mrs M. Bushnell and A.J. Mitchell. Councillor Penny Forbes-Forsyth, the Cabinet Member responsible for Community Safety and Young People and Councillor Mrs D. Grant, Cabinet Member responsible for Parks and Assets also gave their apologies.

In Attendance

Councillor G.E. Forsbrey, Cabinet Member responsible for Planning and Housing, Councillor Mrs C. Bannister, Cabinet Member responsible for Communications and Councillor N. Gething, Cabinet Member responsible for Economic Development attended the meeting and took part in the discussion on those items relevant to their Portfolio.

6/13 Disclosure of Interests

No disclosures were made.

7/13 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2012 were approved as a correct record.

8/13 Matters arising from the minutes

No matters reported.

9/13 Call in of a Leader, Cabinet or Cabinet member Decision

No decisions had been called in.

10/13 Budget Update

The Committee received a presentation from Terry Collier, the Chief Finance Officer on the issues, challenges and core approach and principles underpinning the 2013/14 to 2018 budget. A copy of the presentation is attached and covered the following main areas:

- Business rates
- Council Tax Support
- Universal Credit

- Funding Settlement
- Budget deficit projections and the assumptions behind the projections
- Council Tax

RESOLVED that the presentation from the Chief Finance Officer be received.

11/13 Localisation of Council Tax Support and Technical Reforms to Council Tax Discounts and Premiums

The Committee discussed the report of the Assistant Chief Executive on the introduction of a localised council tax support scheme which would replace the national council tax benefit scheme. In support of the report the Head of Planning and Housing Strategy gave a presentation. A copy of the presentation is attached.

The Committee in considering the matter placed on record their thanks and appreciation to the staff involved in the work needed to introduce a new scheme. The Committee were also extremely pleased that this authority had in recent years achieved a very high collection rate for council tax.

During the general debate the Committee acknowledged that there was an element of risk in the introduction of a new scheme but did not want to review the scheme in a year's time which may have cost implications for residents.

RESOLVED to recommend to the Cabinet:

- (1) That the Committee agrees that the Local Council Tax Support scheme as set out in the report of the Assistant Chief Executive was reasonably balanced given the economic climate and supports approval of the scheme; and
- (2) To note that the Committee acknowledged that there was an element of risk in introducing a new scheme and that their preference was to reduce the risks, as far as possible, so that a review was not required in a year's time.

12/13 Developing the Borough – How our Assets support Voluntary and Community Groups

The Committee received a presentation from David Phillip, Head of Asset Management outlining how our assets support our local voluntary and community groups. A copy of the presentation is attached.

The Committee went on to discuss how the work being undertaken supports the Council's priority of "We will ensure that the Council makes the best use of its land, assets and financial reserves to generate income to help balance our budget, to support future economic development plans or for community benefit."

It was noted that 'assets' is used to describe land, buildings and other structures owned by the council and used for a variety of different social, community and public purposes.

These include community amenities such as village halls, community centres, bowling greens, allotments, council office space. Some of the assets are occupied by voluntary sector organisations and include community associations, scout and guide groups, bowls clubs and charities.

The Committee noted that there were currently 76 council sites being used by community and voluntary groups. In addition the community groups received support in a variety of ways including:

- Loans and grants
- Sharing facilities
- Reductions in rates where the groups have a charitable status.

It was noted that the asset register was regularly updated and currently had 680 entries of the variety of the council's assets. A summary of the assets is as follows:

Total area of land in Councils ownership	800 acres approx.
Total gross internal area of all buildings	68,000m ²
Total income from all assets	£3.4m approx. income
Total cost of planned/responsive maintenance	£756,800 pa
Total cost of utilities	£263,000 pa
Total number of community groups using Spelthorne sites	76
Total asset book value	£42.8 million

The Committee reaffirmed its previous view that there was an urgent need for the economic development strategy to be produced with the Lead Member being the Cabinet Member responsible for economic development.

The Committee had a discussion on the progress being made with the new arrangements for project management and how the flagship projects are being reported.

RESOLVED:

- (1) To re confirm the committee's view that there is an urgent need for an economic development strategy to be produced,
- (2) A summary report and presentation on the new project management arrangements including how the summary flagship reporting is working, be made to the next meeting of the committee;
- (3) The report previously requested by the Committee on the sea cadets be sent to the Chairman in the next three weeks and for circulation to all members of the Committee and Cabinet Members;

- (4) The report for Cabinet on grants to voluntary groups to include the request from this committee that Cabinet encourage councillors to be appointed representatives on those bodies that receive grant funding from the Council; and
- (5) A Task Group be set up to assist in developing the use of our asset with members of the Task Group being Councillors Friday, Patel and R. Dunn. Any other members of the Committee wishing to participate in the work of the Task Group to notify the Chairman of the Committee.

13/13 Source of External Funding

The Committee discussed and received the information circulated at the meeting on external funding obtained.

14/13 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee received the Cabinet Forward Plan.

15/13 Work Programme

The Chairman reported that the 5 February meeting had been moved to 26 March 2013 and at that meeting the following matters would be considered:

- Localism Act
- Sustainability and Communities Act
- Flooding
- Laleham Park
- Rapid Transit System from T5 to Staines-upon-Thames
- Sea Cadets
- Economic Development Strategy

RESOLVED to note the action being taken by the Chairman of the Committee

16/13 Any other Business

No other business reported.