

**Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
7 February 2012**

Present:

Councillor Philippa Broom (Chairman)
Councillor Mrs Marian Rough (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

A. Ayub	R.D. Dunn	Mrs I. Napper
I.J. Beardsmore	M.P.C. Francis	A.C. Patterson
Ms M. Bushnell	D. Gohil	Miss S. Webb

Apologies: Councillors Mrs C.A. Bannister, Mrs C.E. Nichols, Miss D. Patel and Miss J.R. Sexton.

In Attendance

Councillor T. Evans, the Cabinet member for Finance, was in attendance and at the invitation of the Chairman took part in the discussion of those items relevant to his Portfolio.

Councillor R. Watts, the Cabinet Member for Environment, was also in attendance.

1/12 Disclosure of Interests

No disclosures were made.

2/12 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2012 were approved as a correct record.

3/12 Matters arising

The Chairman reported that arrangements were being put in place for representatives from Ashford and St Peter's Hospital Trust to attend a Committee meeting to continue their discussions on future plans for the hospital. Members of the Committee would be notified once final arrangements had been made.

4/12 Call in of Cabinet Decisions

No decisions had been called in.

5/12 Budget 2012/13

The Cabinet Member responsible for Finance, Councillor T. Evans, was in attendance and at the invitation of the Chairman took part in the discussion.

The Chairman reminded the Committee that this was an important high level overview of the impact of the Council's reduction in resources on the borough. There was a need for members to advise of any further assurance required regarding the ongoing management and monitoring of the budget reductions.

The Committee received a presentation from the Chief Finance Officer on the issues, challenges and core approach and principles underpinning 2012/13 budget. The presentation provided a description and an analysis of the impact the budget and service reductions had across the Council. The presentation explained various factors that had been taken into account when decisions on budget reductions had been taken and highlighted how the impact of reductions had been mitigated. The presentation also outlined the strategy for strengthening the Council's financial position for 2013/14 and beyond.

A copy of the presentation is **attached**

At the conclusion of the presentation there was a question and answer session.

On behalf of the committee the Chairman congratulated the Finance officers for balancing the budget for 2012/13 and acknowledged the opportunities being progressed to generate income.

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

6/12 Revenue Monitoring and projected Outturns as at December 2011

The Committee discussed with Adrian Flynn, Senior Accountant, the Revenue monitoring report outlining the current spending and income figures for the period April to December 2011. The Officer reported that the forecast outturn was £12,721m against the revised budget of £12,387m an overspend of £334k (2.7%) this was due to a one off restructuring costs (which produced ongoing savings) being partly offset by a transfer from the Business Improvement Reserve of £186,000. The Officer also reported on the major anticipated variances which included:

- National Non Domestic Rates Overspend
- Increased Asset Management expenditure
- Increased garden waste collection income
- Improved waste recycling
- Increased housing benefit payments over recovery
- Decline in Development Control income
- Reduced Ground Maintenance expenditure
- Business Improvement reduced expenditure
- Assistant Chief Executive redundancy costs.

During the general discussion the Committee gave particular consideration to the possible expenditure involved in purchasing the portacabins currently used by the Sea Cadets, the need for a feasibility study and the implications of providing accommodation for the Sea Cadets at the Lammas Recreation Ground. The committee felt that a more indepth discussion was required on this matter.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report of the Chief Finance Officer outlining the current Revenue spend and forecast outturn position be note; and
2. the Chief Finance Officer to provide a briefing paper on the situation regarding the Sea Cadets and if necessary a special meeting of the Committee be arranged to consider the matter.

7/12 Capital Monitoring Report

The Committee discussed with Adrian Flynn, the Senior Accountant, the Capital monitoring report which covered the period from April to December 2011. He reported that the anticipated projected outturn to spend by the end of the current financial year was £1,559,500 which represented 79% of the revised budget .

During the general discussion the Officers agreed to provide additional information on the Smart phone trial being undertaken.

RESOLVED that the report of the Chief Finance Officer outlining the Capital monitoring position for the period April to December 2011 be received.

8/12 Member Allowances Scheme

Greg Halliwell, the Principal Committee Manager, outlined the main points of the report on the Members Allowances Scheme. He reported that in 1989 there were three types of allowance payable (basic, attendance and special responsibility). Since then the attendance allowance had been included within the basic allowance. The basic allowance was set at a level commensurate with the reasonable, minimum time commitment needed by a councillor to fulfil their role.

The Committee went on to discuss the list of approved duties set out in Appendix 5 to the report and indicated which meetings councillors could claim expenses for.

The Committee commented on the scheme and noted that these views would be conveyed to the Independent Review Panel which was meeting on 9 February 2012.

RESOLVED that:

1. the report on the Members Allowance Scheme be received; and
2. the Principal Committee Manager to convey the views of the Committee to the Independent Review Panel.

9/12 Cabinet Forward Plan

The Committee received the Cabinet Forward Plan

10/12 Work Programme

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE, 7 FEBRUARY 2012 - Continued

The Chairman reported on various matters that would be considered for inclusion in the work programme including:

- A2 Dominon
- The role of the current Standards Committee being incorporated into the work of this committee
- Project Management
- Council's budget including zero budgeting and income regeneration
- Asset Management.
- Information on Partnership arrangements both in the private and public sector and possible including SLM and Lotus

The Chairman also reported that the Lead Member for the Planning Implementation Review Panel would be Councillor Miss D. Patel.

A Member of the Committee asked when the Election Task Group would be meeting.

The Chairman invited members of the Committee to submit topics for consideration for inclusion in the work programme.