

Scrutiny Committee

MEMBERSHIP:-

Councillors Mrs HEALY (Chairman) MARSH (Deputy Chairman), Councillors Mrs BANNISTER, BELSEY and WARNER.

(Apologies for absence were reported from Councillors Lacey OBE and Taylor)

10 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2005.

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2005 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

11 Declarations of Interest.

Councillor Warner declared an interest in the Financial Strategy report in relation to the changes to the Concessionary Fares Scheme as a Non-Executive Director of Eastbourne Buses.

12 Performance Indicators.

The report was submitted to Members on 5 September 2005. Councillor Warner raised a query regarding PI 204. Planning appeals allowed as a percentage of all planning appeals. The Assistant Director – Economy, Tourism and Planning advised Members that the number of appeals overturned had reduced over the past three years. There were a relatively low number of appeals and therefore the outcomes drastically affected the Performance Indicator average.

Noted.

13 Financial Strategy / 2006/07 Budget.

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Management Team providing an update on the Financial Strategy 2006/07 Budget. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services gave a brief introduction to the report. The Cabinet Member for Finance and eGovernment, Councillor Williams, was in attendance to answer Members queries.

Revenue Budget

Councillor Mrs Healy asked Councillor Williams if it was the intention to maintain the target of 2.5% Council Tax increase for the forthcoming year, bearing in mind the pressures facing the Council as outlined within the report. Councillor Williams responded that the 2.5% increase remained as the target and that it would also be the intention to absorb the potential increase in costs with regard to the changes to the concessionary fares scheme.

Councillor Mrs Bannister highlighted her concerns on the ability to maintain the target increase of 2.5% on Council Tax and questioned whether service delivery would be maintained in the light of the potential savings outlined. Councillor Williams responded stating that the £985k of savings required had potentially already been identified and that work would continue through the service and financial planning process.

Councillor Belsey highlighted the huge hole created by the changes to the concessionary fares scheme for Eastbourne and many other Councils, and queried whether the Government had been asked for further funding.

Councillor Williams responded that the Council had written to the ODPM and requested that the funding changes be addressed, a response had been received but no further funding was currently proposed by the Government. Councillor Williams stated that the current scheme was a countywide scheme and that an alternative local scheme would need further investigation. Councillor Mrs Healy stated that it would be desirable to retain the County Card scheme if possible.

Grant formula

The Director of Finance and Corporate Services advised that it was unlikely that overall changes to the Grant Formula would have any positive cash impact on the Council. Councillor Mrs Healy requested further information regarding the efficiencies in Theatres outsourcing. The Director of Finance and Corporate Services stated that more detail would be available during the service and financial planning process.

Capital Budget

Councillor Mrs Bannister stated that Affordable Housing should remain a priority for the Council. Councillor Mrs Healy queried the possibility of investment in Theatres; Councillor Williams responded that this option was being pursued as part of the procurement process. Councillor Mrs Healy also highlighted concerns regarding the future of the Redoubt Fortress and the Bandstand, as it was likely that Lottery funding would be directed towards sporting facilities following the successful Olympic bid.

Noted.

The meeting finished at 7.00 p.m.

Councillor Mrs Healy

Chairman