

Monday 8 February 2010
at 6.00pm



Scrutiny Committee

MEMBERSHIP:-

Councillor MARSDEN (Chairman) Councillors BELSEY, Mrs HEAPS, PURCHASE, THOMPSON and Miss WOODALL.

An apology for absence was reported from Councillor Stanley.

14 Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2009 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

15 Declarations of Interest.

None were received.

16 Finance Matters – Including Consultation on the 2010/11 Budget.

The committee considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer and Head of Strategy and Democracy updating Members on the position of the Council's revenue budget and capital programme at the end of December 2009 and updating Members on the consultation process.

Members noted that the report summarised responses to the various strands of consultation on the 2010/11 budget launched following the draft budget proposals agreed in December 2009.

The report provided an overview of the General Fund 2009/10, the Capital Programme and Budget Consultation.

The committee noted that the 2009/10 general revenue fund account was predicted to outturn within acceptable tolerances.

It was noted that the consultation process on the 2010/11 budget to date had provoked a reasonable response level and it was felt that it more than met the statutory minimum requirement. The responses were summarised in appendix 1 to the report.

NOTED.

17 General Fund Revenue Budget 2010/11 and Capital Programme 2009/13.

The committee considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer consulting Members on the general fund budget proposals for 2010/11 and the Capital Fund Programme 2009-13. The Housing Revenue Account 2010/11 and

associated three capital programme, together with rent setting for 2010/11 is subject of a separate report due to be presented to Cabinet on 10 February 2010.

Members noted that the Council had revised its medium term financial strategy (MTFS) in October and resulting in draft 2010/11 budget proposals in December 2009. The budget had been subject to consultation; an update of the results of the various strands of consultation was dealt with earlier on this agenda, and was the product of various plans and strategies as part of an integrated corporate planning process linked principally to:

- The MTFS
- Asset Management Plans
- The Corporate Plan
- Workforce Strategy
- Service Plans
- Treasury Management Strategy

A summary of the Budget proposals was included at section 2 of the report, along with further details on the 2010/11 resources, specific grants, Budget movements, Risks, Contingencies and Reserves and the Capital programme 2009-2013.

The report included comprehensive information on the Council's finances together with details of budget proposals developed in consultation with members and stakeholders for endorsement by Scrutiny and recommended by Cabinet for approval by full Council.

Councillor Mattock, Cabinet member for Financial Services stated that she was pleased with this year's budget following concerns earlier in the year and savings had been identified which would not impact on frontline services. Councillor Mattock stated that the next 12 months would be a testing time for the Council.

The committee discussed the low increase in Council Tax, building maintenance, devolved budgets and bereavement services. The reduction of the Homelessness budget was highlighted; however, Members were advised that less people were seeking support as assistance was being provided at the earliest opportunity. The Committee expressed their thanks to all staff involved in compiling the budget for 2010/11.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet be advised that the Scrutiny Committee endorse the proposals contained within the report and support the recommendations for approval by full Council.

18 Update on the Tourism Marketing Activity for Events organised by Eastbourne Borough Council in 2009.

The committee considered the report of the Tourism Development and Communications Manager informing members of the marketing activity carried out for the Council's events programme during 2009. The report showed how marketing budgets were spent and what level of media awareness was raised through this activity. Each event shows the media value for 2008 as a comparison to the value achieved for 2009. With non

ticketed events, such as Airbourne there was no measure in place to count attendance, the PR value was used to measure the success of the event. The Committee expressed their thanks to all staff involved in providing and supporting the Events programme for 2009/10.

RESOLVED: 1) That the Council's continued approach to Events marketing for 2010 be agreed.

19 Eastbourne Park Supplementary Planning Document.

The committee considered the report of the Chief Executive – acting as Senior Head of Environment and Planning informing members of the on going work in developing the Eastbourne Park Supplementary Planning Document. The report detailed the issues, vision and objectives and the constraints and opportunities for developing Eastbourne Park. Appendix A to the report provided a list of 10 objectives chosen for the Supplementary Planning Document. Each objective also included alternative high medium and low cost, as well as short, medium and long term options and research is being carried out to evaluate and determine how feasible they would be to implement. Community Consultation and Member involvement was also highlighted within the report and members were asked to support the preparation of the Eastbourne Park Supplementary Planning Document and ongoing evaluation of the various options for achieving the Council's vision and objectives for the area.

Members considered the timescales involved, and were advised that officers would visit other areas within the South East to see what is happening elsewhere. Members suggest a link with the Cultural Strategy which was currently being developed as method for attracting further funding and maximising grant opportunities.

The committee expressed their thanks to Dave Pearce, Planning Assistant for his efforts whilst at the Council and wished him luck in his new role.

NOTED.

20* Petitions – Response to Government consultation and implementation of new duty.

The committee considered the report of the Local Democracy Manager informing members of a new duty to respond to petitions from people who either live, work or study in the council's area. Councils must respond to 3 types of petition:

- An ordinary petition.
- A petition requiring full council debate.
- A petition calling for a senior officer to appear at a public session of an overview and scrutiny committee.

Members were advised that the council must set minimum signature thresholds for each type of petition. In addition councils must make provision for both paper and electronic petitions.

The Government were consulting on draft statutory guidance and timing of implementation of the new duty. The report included a suggested response

to the consultation and also made recommendations to Council in respect of implementing the new duty.

In addition, the report outlined proposals for the East Sussex councils to collaborate on a shared e-petitions facility whereby people could submit and sign petitions electronically.

RESOLVED: That Scrutiny (1) Agree the response to government as set out in the appendix to the report.

(2) Note the likely timetable for implementation of the new duty.

(3) Endorse the joint approach being developed across East Sussex for a shared e-petitions facility and noting that this might require a common petitions scheme with the same signature thresholds.

(4) Note that the Local Democracy Manager and the Head of IT and T-Government in liaison with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the lead Cabinet member would decide all matters in relation to the introduction of an e-petitions facility.

(5) Seek full Council approval to the Local Democracy Manager in liaison with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Scrutiny Committee and the lead Cabinet member being given delegated authority to:-

(a) Agree revised wording of the Council's petitions scheme (section M in part 3 of the Council's Constitution) so as to comply with the requirements of the legislation and statutory guidance, including:-

- determining the signature thresholds for debates;
- specifying the senior officers who may be held to account at an open meeting of the Scrutiny Committee and the signature thresholds for such petitions; and
- determining the minimum number of signatures for an 'ordinary' petition.

(b) Review the petitions scheme and thresholds 12 months after implementation of the e-petitions facility and report to the Scrutiny Committee.

21 Managing Performance.

The committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Strategy and Democracy assessing the authority's Performance Management approach for 2008/09 and setting out the planned improvements which had been implemented as a result of the CAA assessment.

Members were advised that in December 2009, the results of the first Comprehensive Area Assessment were published by the Audit Commission on the "OnePlace¹" website. Eastbourne Borough Council was given an overall Organisational Assessment score of 1 out of 4 which means "performs poorly." The report included;

- An overview of the Council's organisational assessment
- A contextual analysis of the assessment, the Council's approach and difficulties encountered and;
- The Council's improvement plans ahead of re-assessment and for long term performance management

¹ <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk>

Members agreed that in order to achieve and maintain improved performance in the CAA Organisational Assessment the authority needed to focus on making robust changes to its performance management approach. This would require a corporate-wide commitment and consistent approach to using performance information in a strategic and open manner. Work was already underway to provide a framework for this and commitment had been made by staff, managers and members to implement the change.

The committee discussed the recent changes in the Benefits department and progress made towards improving the service. In addition Members were advised that The Council would be returning to a quarterly reporting format to Scrutiny Committee for its key performance and finance data. Scrutiny Monthly meetings (held with the Chair and Vice-Chair) would be used to look at specific issues, upcoming challenges etc on a more regular basis. Scrutiny members would also be involved in a working group looking at revising the authority's overall performance management framework.

RESOLVED: 1) That members note the assessment of the authority's performance management approach for 2008/9
2) That Members endorse the action plan set out in appendix 2 to improve the authority's Strategic Performance Management
3) That the proposed scope of Scrutiny Members' involvement in the work towards re-assessment in 2010 as set out in appendix 1 be noted and endorsed.
4) That the content of the action plan in response to the Use of Resources part of the Organisational Assessment set out in appendix 3 be noted and endorsed.

The meeting finished at 7.46pm.

**Councillor Marsden
Chairman**