

Cherwell District Council

Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 17 July 2012 at 6.30 pm

- Present:** Councillor Nicholas Mawer (Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Alyas Ahmed
Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor Margaret Cullip
Councillor Jon O'Neill
Councillor Nigel Randall
Councillor Lawrie Stratford
Councillor Douglas Williamson
Councillor Sean Woodcock
- Substitute Members:** Councillor Andrew Beere (In place of Councillor Patrick Cartledge)
Councillor Rose Stratford (In place of Councillor Neil Prestidge)
- Officers:** Karen Curtin, Head of Finance and Procurement (for agenda item 7)
Jo Pitman, Head of Transformation (for agenda item 6)
Stephanie Rew, HR Manager (for agenda item 6)
Natasha Clark, Team Leader, Democratic and Elections

16 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

17 **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

18 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2012 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

19 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 4 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

20 **Business Case to Restructure the Resources Directorate Support Team**

The Board considered an exempt report of the Head of Transformation which presented the business case to restructure the Resources Directorate Support Team.

In introducing the report, the HR Manager explained that the present structure had been formed in February 2010 to bring together one administrative support team within the directorate. On 1 September 2012 a new Joint Management Team Support Team would be implemented and as a consequence of the creation of this team, consideration needed to be given to the wider Resources Directorate Support Team.

Following consideration of three options and consultation with affected staff and Unison, the proposal that would bring most benefit was to de-centralise the Resources Directorate Support Team and return the 8 individual post holders back to the local service teams within that Directorate.

In response to Members' questions, the Head of Transformation explained that the review of the Resources Directorate Support Team had been necessitated by the changes in the provision of support to the Joint Management Team and confirmed that the review would not result in any redundancies.

Resolved

- (1) That plans to de-centralise the Resources Directorate Support Team and return the 8 individual post holders back to the local service teams within that Directorate be noted and welcomed.

21 **Readmittance of the Public and Press**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

Local Government Resources Review

The Chairman welcomed the Head of Finance and Procurement to the meeting and advised Members that the briefing on the Local Government Resources Review (LGGR) would serve as an introduction to the Board's scrutiny of the budget 2013/14 and assist Members in agreeing the approach for the budget scrutiny.

The Head of Finance and Procurement gave a presentation which provided an overview of the financial context, financial projections, the impact of the LGGR, the budget setting process and suggested topics for Members to consider as part of the budget 2013/14 scrutiny review.

The Board was advised that the 2012-13 budget was £14.3m. There had been a net reduction of 31% in the Council's budget between 2008/08 and 2012/13, in part as the decision taken by the Council in 2008/09 to cease reliance on investment income. Reductions in Government Grants and the 2012 spending review had also necessitated budget cuts to ensure a balanced budget was achieved.

In terms of the impact of the LGGR, the Head of Finance and Procurement explained that from April 2013 council tax benefit would be abolished and replaced with a council tax support scheme, which must be defined by individual Local Authorities. Funding for the scheme would be a grant based on the current Council Tax Benefit expenditure with a reduction of 10%. Local Authorities were required to set their own scheme by 31 January 2013 otherwise a default scheme would be imposed by Central Government.

The first phase of the LGGR included plans to change the way in which Business Rates were collected and distributed from April 2013. The intention of the scheme was to give Local Authorities an incentive to promote growth over the longer term and reduce dependency on central government. The scheme allowed for authorities to form pools and be treated as a single authority under the scheme. The Board was advised that at their July meeting the Executive had agreed for CDC to express an interest in pooling across Oxfordshire.

The Head of Finance and Procurement advised the Board that there were five key elements to Welfare Reform: benefit cap; the extension of size eligibility criteria to social housing; the replacement of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) by a Personal Independence Payment (PIP); and, the localisation of Social Fund.

Members raised concerns about the potential impacts of the welfare reforms the financial implications for CDC fulfilling its social responsibilities and on residents in the district and agreed that it would be useful to consider the implications with Housing Officers.

In response to Members' comments, the Head of Finance and Procurement explained that officers were working closely with partners, including the County Council, the Citizen's Advice Bureau and Registered Providers and would be providing assistance to individuals who would be affected by the changes.

The Head of Finance and Procurement provided an overview of the budget setting process advising Members of the current Medium Term Financial Strategy assumptions, current financial projections and draft 2013/14 budget forecast. The budget guidelines would be submitted to the Executive for consideration in October 2012, draft 1 of the budget in December 2012 and draft 2 in February 2013 prior to submission to Council in February 2013.

The Board then considered potential topics for the budget 2013/14 scrutiny. The Chairman reminded Members that at their June meeting Councillors Lawrie Stratford, Nigel Randall and Maurice Billington had been nominated to work with officers on the development of a Concessions Policy for the Council and that Councillor Sean Woodcock be kept informed of the development of the Policy. Members agreed that the remit of this Group should be extended to review fees and charges, which was undertaken bi-annually by the Board as part of the budget scrutiny process. The Group would meet with officers during August and September and report back to the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board in October.

As part of the annual budget scrutiny the Board reviewed the capital bids and Members agreed this should continue to form part of the budget scrutiny review. The Board agreed that the Performance Scrutiny Working Group and Finance Scrutiny Working Group meetings scheduled in September should be used to score and review the capital bids and that all Members should be invited to attend both meetings. Members noted that disabled facilities grants, which was included on the Board's work programme, would be considered as part of the capital bid review.

Members agreed that they would also like to consider homelessness and temporary accommodation budgets in light of potential implications of Welfare Reform. Members noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be receiving a briefing on benefit changes focussing on what it would mean for CDC service delivery and the impact upon residents in the district and requested that the Democratic and Elections Team Leader liaise with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairman regarding inviting Board members to this meeting. Members noted that within the remit of each scrutiny committee, the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board would consider the financial implications whilst the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would consider policy matters.

The Board also requested that an update on recommendations from the previous two budget scrutiny review be presented to Members for consideration.

In terms of other budget scrutiny topics, the Board agreed that they should consider Environmental Services with a focus on waste and recycling including any budgetary issues with Oxfordshire Waste Partnership (OWP) credits as this was an area they had not considered previously as part of the budget scrutiny but the OWP remained on the work programme following a review of the council's role in the OWP and uncertainty about the financial arrangements,

Resolved

- (1) That the following topics form the budget 2013/14 scrutiny review:
 - Fees and Charges: concessions and bi-annual review
 - Capital programme
 - Environmental Service
 - Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Budgets
 - A review of all proposals recommended over the last 2 years
- (2) That the Chairman, Head of Finance and Procurement and the Democratic and Elections Team Leader liaise to agree the timetable for the budget 2013/14 scrutiny.

23 **Draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/12**

The Board considered a report of the Head of Law and Governance which presented the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/12.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2011/12 be noted.

24 **Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board Work Programme 2012/13**

The Board considered a report of Head of Law and Governance which presented the Resources and Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 for consideration.

The Board noted that in light of the discussions at the previous agenda item, the October R&PSB meeting would now take place on 16 October 2012 and the 18 September Finance Scrutiny Working Group and 25 September 2012 Performance Scrutiny Working Group meetings would be used to consider the capital bids as part of the budget scrutiny work.

Resolved

- (1) That the Resources & Performance Scrutiny Board work programme 2012/13 be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chairman:

Date: