

CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2nd April 2007

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Bell (Chair), Councillor Mulgrew (Vice Chair) and Councillor Jones.

Conservative Group

Councillors Atkin, Bale and Bladen.

APOLOGY

An apology for absence from the Meeting was received from Councillor Tilley (Labour Group).

COS/49. **MINUTES**

The Open Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 29th January 2007 and the Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th February 2007 were taken as read, approved as true records and signed by the Chair.

COS/50. **FEEDBACK FROM FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

The Chair introduced this item and copies of the report considered by the Finance and Management Committee at its Meeting on 22nd March 2007, on the review of the Budget Proposals and the Information Project were circulated.

(a) **Review of the Budget Proposals**

The Chair advised that the Finance and Management Committee had accepted the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations, as follows:-

- That new spending proposals brought forward outside the annual bidding process be subject to the same level of scrutiny as proposals within the bidding process before proceeding to the appropriate policy committee.
- That new spending proposals clearly explain how those proposals are to be financed, i.e. if 'existing resources' are to be utilised then those resources are identified.
- That reserves are used only to finance one off/short-term projects or to balance out shortfalls as, over the longer term, spending reserves to finance ongoing expenditure is unsustainable.
- That Officers continue to monitor income levels and build in realistic assessments within the budget, as recently evidenced by an increase in the budgeted planning fee income.

This would be reflected within the Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report.

(b) Information Project

The Chair advised that the Finance and Management Committee had also approved the recommendations made on the Information Project. He looked forward to an improvement in displays within the Council Offices and noted that some improvements had already been made. In reply to a question, the Director of Corporate Services explained how staff would examine in detail the Scrutiny Committee's recommendations from the Information Project and ensure these were implemented. Councillor Atkin used an example to demonstrate the need to remove leaflets once they were 'out of date'. The Director explained the efforts to undertake this and the Chair agreed this issue was about the management of the literature on display.

The report was noted.

COS/51. ANNUAL REPORT

It was reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report would be presented to the Council Meeting on 19th April 2007. The draft was currently being prepared and consideration was given to a document circulated. Members were asked to provide feedback to the Principal Policy Officer by Thursday of this week. It was proposed that the Annual Report's format would be the same as in previous years. The Chairs of the Corporate and Community and Scrutiny Committees would present their respective sections of the report to the Council Meeting.

In reviewing the document, a question was submitted about the proposed consideration of the Asset Management Plan during 2007/08. The Director of Corporate Services sought a reminder of the areas that would be considered. She outlined the progress being made on asset management and the improved Use of Resources rating. The Chair confirmed that there was not an intention to make commitments for the Scrutiny Committee for the following municipal year.

It was agreed that the Policy Section check the previous decision relating to future consideration of the Asset Management Plan.

It was also agreed that Members submit comments on the draft Annual Report to the Policy Section, to enable it to be finalised and submitted to the Council Meeting on 19th April 2007.

As this was the last meeting of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in the current municipal year, the Chair thanked Members and Officers for the work undertaken.

R. BELL

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 4.50 p.m.