

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

20th January 2010

**PRESENT:-**

**Conservative Group**

Councillor Jones (Chairman), Councillor Mrs. Farrington (Vice-Chairman) and Councillors Atkin, Mrs. Hood and Mrs. Plenderleith.

**Labour Group**

Councillors Bambrick and Mrs. Mead.

The following Members were also in attendance and, with the approval of the Chairman, spoke to the Minute No's indicated:-

Councillor Harrison - Minute No. OS/16.

Councillor Bladen - Minute No. OS/16.

OS/15. **APOLOGY**

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

OS/16. **CONSOLIDATED BUDGET PROPOSALS 2010/11 AND FINANCIAL PLAN TO 2015**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Harrison, Chairman of the Finance and Management Committee and Councillor Bladen, Chairman of the Environmental and Development Services Committee who had both been invited to contribute to this item.

A report was submitted detailing the Council's overall financial position for the 2010/11 budget round. Essentially, it built on the financial plan and strategy approved in 2009 and covered the following sections :-

- The Council's current spending and proposed base budget position for 2010/11.
- The General Fund's 5-year financial projection including proposed spending by policy committees and associated analysis to 2015, which formed the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
- The proposed council tax base and collection fund position.
- A review and update of the existing capital investment programme and financing available.
- Proposals for meeting the projected budget deficit in 2011/12 and shortfall in capital financing to 2015.

The report then examined in more detail the Council's financial settlement for 2010/11, the General Fund 5-year financial projection and proposals for

meeting the budget deficit and balancing the MTFP. Information was submitted with regard to Council Tax, comprising of the Council Tax base, the collection fund surplus/deficit and Council Tax levels. Finally, the report focused on capital investment and financing.

The report was accompanied by a presentation from the Head of Finance and Property Services and he was thanked for his presentation and comprehensive report. The Director of Corporate Services and Head of Finance and Property Services were both thanked for their contributions towards the budget proposals.

Arising from the presentation, a number of questions and comments were received from Members relating to the low amount of Council house sales; fairground charges; expenditure on partnerships and efficiency savings. Detailed responses were provided.

Prior to the Meeting, the Chairmen of the policy committees had been requested to identify areas within the budget proposals, which this Committee could focus on. Proposals included a review of the waste service contract. In this regard, the Director of Community Services was thanked for his officers ensuring that all targets with regard to this service area had been met. It was considered that a review could look at value for money and customer satisfaction.

A further proposal related to private hire licensing, arising from recent on-the-spot vehicle testing. It was suggested that both reviews could be scoped for consideration in the following financial year and might be suitable for task group working.

The Chairman requested Members to review the report. Copies of the presentation slides were requested for Members. The unconfirmed Minutes from this Meeting would be tabled at the Meeting on 10th February 2010 to provide a recap and both sets of unconfirmed Minutes would be referred to the Finance and Management Committee, as the report on budget scrutiny, as in previous years.

**It was agreed that the report be received and that recommendations be submitted to the Finance and Management Committee on the two potential review areas.**

OS/17. **BROADBAND**

Further to Minute No. OS/12 of 9th December 2009 on the review of Broadband in South Derbyshire, it had been agreed to submit a draft review report to this Meeting for approval.

Since the last Meeting, representatives of the Council had attended the House of Lords, linked to the Digital Bill, which included broadband provision. A Meeting was arranged with British Telecom's and Openreach Management and a report was provided on the Meeting.

Those present were advised of the frustrations faced by many across the District due to a slow, unreliable Broadband service. Three apologies were received for the disappointing presentation given by Management from BT and Openreach at the last Committee Meeting. A commitment was received to undertake a thorough survey of the Etwall exchange and its provision to Hilton. An offer was also received from Kathryn Oakley to attend a future Meeting of the Committee to discuss the issues further. A commitment was given to review the upgrade of broadband provision in South Derbyshire. It was advised that many areas of South Derbyshire would be in the last third of areas to be upgraded to the “superfast” service, and only if cost and market conditions were met. Additional further meetings were held with Telecom experts.

Information had also been provided on “light speed Derby”, a cross sector initiative based on the concept that a strong local partnership could provide the best possible market conditions for the provision of superfast broadband. The remaining Members of the Committee requested a copy of this literature. An invitation had also been received for all Members of the Committee to look at the plusnet service, available in Sheffield.

The Chairman advised that Swindon City Council had recently secured external funding for the improvement of Broadband services in its area and he suggested that the Council be approached to identify how this had been achieved. It was advised that Swindon Council had a private sector partner. The Chairman made reference to similar funding schemes being used in Cornwall and Yorkshire where the local authorities had secured the funding to enable BT to install fibre optic cables. Reference was also made to a similar scheme in Gateshead. The Chairman advised that there were a number of ongoing joint/regional reviews on Broadband provision. A Member made reference to the Countryland Business Association as a possible funding partner.

**It was agreed:-**

- (1) That, in the circumstances, the draft review report would not be submitted to Council at the present time.**
- (2) That an updated review report detailing proposals for EU funding and partnership scrutiny be submitted to a future Meeting.**
- (3) That, should the responses requested from BT, including production of technical data for the Etwall Exchange, be received by the requested date of 5th February 2010, Kathryn Oakley (Director of Public Policy and Affairs, BT) be requested to attend the next Meeting.**
- (4) That if possible, the invitation for Members to visit Plusnet during early February be accepted.**

OS/18. **SHOPMOBILITY/YOUTH INFORMATION SHOP**

Under Minute No. OS/14 of 9th December 2009, Members had been updated on the Shopmobility/Youth Information Shop review. It had been agreed that further consideration be given to the review at this Meeting.

It was suggested that further financial assistance might be available for the organisation, such as a hardship grant through the business rates administered by the District Council. Other suggestions for potential funding assistance included the Community Partnership and National Lottery Funding. The CVS also provided assistance for local voluntary organisations with regard to numerous issues. Likewise, Age Concern could assist with an application for the organisation to become a social enterprise, which could enhance the chances of funding provision.

It was noted that the Council's website contained links to various other organisations that might be able to offer assistance. Members and Officers were thanked for their input on this review.

**It was agreed that the Shopmobility/Youth Information Shop review be closed.**

C. JONES

CHAIRMAN

The Meeting terminated at 7.55 p.m.