

FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE (SPECIAL)

29th June 2006

PRESENT:-

Labour Group

Councillor Wilkins (Chair), Councillor Pabla (Vice-Chair) and Councillors Carroll, Dunn (Substituting for Councillor Southerd), Taylor and Whyman, M.B.E.

Conservative Group

Councillors Harrison, Lemmon, Nalty, Mrs. Renwick and Mrs. Wheeler.

In Attendance

Councillor Atkin (Conservative Group)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the Meeting were received from Councillors Harrington and Southerd (Labour Group).

MATTERS DELEGATED TO COMMITTEE

FM/26. **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2005/06**

The Committee considered a report on the Council's Annual Accounts and Financial Statements for 2005/06. It was noted that the accounts and financial statements were yet to be audited. Members were advised that the Account and Audit Regulations 2003 provided that the Annual Accounts must be considered and approved by the appropriate Committee. The Regulations also required the Chair of the relevant committee to sign the accounts. This indicated that Members had considered them in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.

The Committee was advised that the first part of the Council's Statement of Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2006 explained how the accounts were set out, provided a background and an overview of the Council's financial standing. To improve the presentation of what was often complex financial information, a summary of the accounts had been produced. This was intended to provide an overview of the detailed statements in a way that was clear and straight forward.

Members were advised that the Summary of Accounts together with the main accounts would be published on the Council's website, with some information also being included in the Autumn edition of the Council's newspaper. As part of this process, it was proposed to consult with local residents and other stakeholders later in the year on their requirements regarding the format and content of the summary of accounts.

The Committee was informed that the Audit Commission would commence their audit of the accounts in August 2006 and would issue their opinion by

30th September 2006. The Council's Chief Finance Officer would be required to provide a letter of representation to the external auditors, which would confirm that there were no significant events which had occurred after the end of the accounting period which would materially affect the accounts for 2005/06. Members were advised that the Audit Commission would report on the accounts to the Audit Sub-Committee at its Meeting on 27th September 2006 on whether any issues had arisen from their audit.

The Committee thanked Officers for their work in the professional and timely production of the financial statements and accounts.

Councillor Harrison raised several questions on the accounts, which were discussed by Members and appropriate information was provided by Officers.

Councillor Harrison requested that the following amendments be made to the Statement of Accounts 2005/06:

Page 8: Net Cost of Service

The Total Net Spending of £16,082 be cross referenced at page 16, Consolidated Revenue Account.

Page 12: Statement of Accounting Policies

1[b] should refer to paragraph 10

1[c] should refer to paragraph 14

The Committee agreed to include the above amendments as they would help to clarify the Accounts.

RESOLVED:-

- (1) That the Council's Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2006 [subject to Audit] be approved, with the following amendments:

Page 8: Net Cost of Service

The total Net Spending of £16,082 be cross referenced at page 16, Consolidated Revenue Account

Page 12: Statement of Accounting Policies

1[b] should refer to paragraph 10

1[c] should refer to paragraph 14

- (2) That the Chair of the Committee be authorised to sign the accounts in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.
- (3) That the Summary of Accounts 2005/06 [subject to Audit] be approved and authorised for publication alongside the main financial statements.

FM/27. **REVIEW OF THE SOUTH DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT CORPORATE NEWSPAPER**

The Committee considered a report on the work of the Editorial Working Panel in respect of the South Derbyshire District Corporate Newspaper.

The Committee was informed that the first two issues of the South Derbyshire District News had been well received as a vehicle to communicate

the work of the authority to residents and businesses in the District. Members were asked to consider whether partner organisations should be asked to make a financial contribution to defray publication costs if the newspaper was to contain articles about the work of their organisations.

A variety of views were expressed by Members on whether Partner organisations should be asked to make a financial contribution to deliver publication costs.

The Committee was asked to note that if a fourth issue of the District Newspaper was to be produced, a contribution of £10,000 would be required from the Council's General Reserves. If four editions of the newspaper were produced on an ongoing basis each year, then an additional £20,000 per year in the Council's Base Budget would be required through the Council's approved Service Development procedure during the next budget round.

The South Derbyshire District News aimed to increase the awareness and take-up of Council services and help achieve a better understanding of the Council's policies, services and achievements. The News also aimed to improve access to and provide information on the Council's services for the whole community, including hard to reach groups.

The first two issues of The News were distributed to 38,000 homes and businesses in South Derbyshire. A Survey in the second edition of The News indicated that it had generally received a positive response, but there were responses which were critical. Annexe "A" of the report had a précis of the positive comments and all of the critical comments in respect of the newspaper. Annexe "B" of the report gave a breakdown of the coverage of each Council Department in The News.

RESOLVED:-

That the Committee:-

- (1) Notes the progress with regard to the quarterly South Derbyshire District News.
- (2) Agrees to fund the fourth edition of the South Derbyshire District News (The News) in 2006/2007 by a further contribution of £10,000 from general reserves.
- (3) Agrees in principle to a supplementary development bid in the next budget round to support the ongoing publication of the South Derbyshire District News (The News).

P.J. WILKINS

CHAIR

The Meeting terminated at 6.40 p.m.