

Monday 7 February 2011  
at 6.00pm



# Scrutiny Committee

## MEMBERSHIP:-

Councillor MARSDEN (Chairman) Councillors SZANTO (Deputy Chairman) BELSEY, Mrs POOLEY and THOMPSON.

An apology for absence was reported from Councillor Woodall.

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## 18 Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2010 were submitted and approved and the Chairman was authorised to sign them as a correct record.

## 19 Declarations of Interest.

None were received.

## 20 General Fund Revenue Budget 2011/12 and Capital Programme 2010/14.

The committee considered the report of the Chief Finance Officer consulting Members on the general fund budget proposals for 2011/12 and the Capital Fund Programme 2010-14.

Members noted that the Council had revised its medium term financial strategy (MTFS) had been the subject of extensive consultation reported to Cabinet in December 2010.

The budget was a 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 2011/12 resources, specific grants, Budget movements, Risks, Contingencies and Reserves and the Capital programme 2010-2014.

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.

The committee discussed the improvement in the Benefits performance and how those savings had now been included within the budget for 2011/12. In addition members discussed the Concessionary fares and their transfer to the County Council. Members raised queries on any liabilities the Council may have as a result of claims from bus operators. Members also considered the suggested provision of Solar Panels, the benefits to Eastbourne and methods of funding the scheme. The Committee were advised that the Officers were in the process of developing a sound business case for such a scheme, to help mitigate any potential risks before proceeding.

Councillor Belsey sought clarification of the types of 'one off' investments mentioned as part of the opportunities for the use of Reserves. Clarification was also sought regarding the Government Formula Grant and Council Tax Grant, the reduction in land charges costs, and how any potential savings targets had been factored into the Medium Term Financial Strategy for the next three years.

Councillor Marsden raised the point that as reports were being slimmed down, background papers were also being referenced and it was therefore becoming more difficult for members to have a point of reference for queries and developments arising from discussions at previous meetings. The Chief Executive agreed to consider how best to provide members with all relevant information for future reports, potentially including a reference document with reports when necessary.

**RESOLVED:** That Cabinet be advised that the Scrutiny Committee noted the proposals contained within the report.

## **21 Managing Performance – Corporate Improvement Progress.**

The committee considered the report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Strategy and Democracy on behalf of the Scrutiny Review Team.

Members were reminded that following the overall rating of the Council as "poor" under Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), a report was submitted to Scrutiny Committee on 8 February 2010 assessing the authority's performance management approach and setting out the planned improvements which had been implemented or were proposed. The committee endorsed the action plan and decided to appoint a Scrutiny Review Team to oversee the improvement journey process.

Scrutiny Committee received a further report on 5 July 2010 setting out progress at that point, endorsed the action plan of ongoing activity and, with the demise of CAA, supported the proposal to engage the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) to undertake a 'critical friend' peer review of our managing performance improvement journey progress following CAA. Scrutiny Committee also supported the ongoing development of the Local Futures evidence database and the Covalent performance management system. Those recommendations were subsequently approved by the Cabinet at their meeting on 14 July 2010.

Members noted that with funding assistance as part of the Council's partnership working with Improvement and Efficiency South East (IESE) the Council had been able to use the Local Futures evidence database to more effectively underpin the corporate priority themes within the 2010/11 corporate plan. This work had continued to develop and would be enhanced further within the next edition of the Corporate Plan.

Again, having used IESE funding contributions towards the purchase of the Covalent Performance Management System, the Council had been building its usage and could now depict an over-arching strategy map that cascaded down through the corporate priority themes and to the progress on the key projects. The Council had also completed the mapping of all services/functions in the Council – identifying all objectives, activities, priority theme focus, targets, resources, performance indicators for inclusion on the system.

Members noted the considerable work undertaken by the Leadership Team on the future strategic direction of the Council, particularly having regard to anticipated financial challenges and the desire to move the Council from its current emphasis as a transactional hub towards more of a community leader role. All services had been subject to a prioritisation exercise and given varying financial target spreads depending on their community value. This has been assisted by a completely re-designed service planning process covering a 3-year plan to enable prudent budget setting in 2011/12 with future gaps to be owned by the Sustainable Service Delivery Strategy (SSDS).

The report highlighted the recent inspection results especially the GOSE peer review of Managing performance. The full GOSE and PKF reports were submitted to Cabinet at their meeting on 20 October 2010 but, for member's information, were attached at **appendices 1 and 2** to the report.

Finally members wanted that the key message from the GOSE peer review was the expectation of sustainability, with improvements included into the 2011/12 edition of the Corporate Plan. The report identified the key challenges and proposed direction for the review team.

**RESOLVED:** (1) That the outcomes of the GOSE peer review, the PKF audit, the activity progress, and the work of the Scrutiny Review Team so far, be noted and endorsed  
2) That the next steps of the improvement journey as set out in **paragraph 4**, and the Scrutiny Review Team, in line with the modified scope as set out in **appendix 4**, be endorsed  
3) That the membership of the Review Team for the next 12 months be confirmed at the Annual Council meeting on 25 May 2011.

## 22 Corporate Performance Quarter 3 2010-2011.

The 2010/15 Corporate Plan set out a series of key actions and indicators to deliver and measure progress against key priorities. Throughout the year, performance against key indicators and actions are reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny on a quarterly basis.

Members asked for clarification and further information on the following:

CD\_010 Number of Gambling Act 2005 applications passed – reasons for the low number of applications. The Senior Head of Development and Environment advised members that this target would be met despite the low performance this quarter.

TL\_001- Holiday Guides distributed – The Senior Head of Tourism and Leisure advised that work as underway to align the quarters to better measure the distribution of the Guides as the distributors were currently working to the calendar year whilst the Council worked to the financial year.

TL\_005 – Marketing Campaign value for money - The Senior Head of Tourism and Leisure advised that this issues was the same as the previous issue and that a full years figures would give a more accurate assessment.

DE\_001b – Satisfaction with street cleanliness – street sweeping – The Senior Head of Development and Environment advised that the Council was in the top quartile according to the latest survey which had increased from the previous year.

CD\_008 – Decent Homes Funding – Members were advised that Eastbourne Homes were currently rebidding for funding for 2011/13 although they had been advised that funding would not be granted to authorities who had more than 90% of homes at a 'decent' standard. However, as the majority of works outstanding were for retirement housing, Eastbourne Homes were working to develop contingency plans with the Homes and Community Agency.

CD\_013 – Local Arrears of Council Tax collected – Councillor Marsden commented on the notes within the report and the Senior Head of Community advised that there had been a steady performance in this area bringing the Council nearer to the annual target.

CD\_014 – Number of Incidences of homelessness prevented and relieved - the Senior Head of Community advised that partner organisations were assisting earlier which demonstrated the suggested approach was working and also that this target would need to be revised in future years to better reflect the positive outcomes/results of early intervention and joint working.

CRPP\_025 – Reduce anti-social behaviour incidents by 20% from 2007/08 – members referred to the notes relating to this indicator and the amended methods that the Police were using to record incidents, making data comparison more difficult. The Senior Head of Community advised that he would report back to the next Scrutiny Committee.

TL\_014 – Towner Visitors – Councillor Marsden queried the issue regarding the shutters and was advised that the problem was structural and therefore would take longer to resolve. The shop had been relocated and every effort was being made to mitigate any inconvenience for customers and staff.

CS\_005 – Payment of invoices within 30 Days – The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the new technology purchased as part of the AGILE programme had helped improved the targets for this indicator and that

further improvements would be seen within the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the new financial year.

**NOTED.**

### **23 Devolved Budgets and Neighbourhood Panels.**

Members considered reports from Meads, Old Town and Ratton regarding the Devolved Budgets and Schemes for each ward. Details can be found at <http://www.eastbourne.gov.uk/council/ward-budgets/completed-projects/>

**NOTED.**

### **24 Neighbourhood Panels.**

Ratton Ward – Ratton has an active panel that meets every eight – nine weeks. Members agreed the panel had achieved a lot including the works with East Sussex County Council for the speed reduction measures on a section of Willingdon Road. Each of the three action areas highlighted at the beginning of the year had been achieved.

Meads Ward – currently ran two panels the Meads panel being more successful than the Town Centre Panel with around 15-20 residents attending the meetings. Issues relating to Brighton University and the Welkin site were being resolved and the new liaison team was very effective. The Town Centre Panel boundaries appeared to confuse some residents with attendance at neighbouring panels being the preferred option. Members felt it was important to highlight the successes of the panels to a wider audience,

Old Town Ward – Councillor Szanto advised that on average 20 people attended although the future of the panel was unsure at the present time.

**NOTED.**

The meeting closed at 7.45 p.m.

**Councillor Marsden  
Chairman**