

SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE

12th December, 2012

Scrutiny Co-ordination

Committee Members Present: Councillor Mrs Abbott
Councillor Mrs Bigham (Chair)
Councillor Mrs Fletcher
Councillor Howells
Councillor Lakha
Councillor M. Mutton
Councillor Skinner (Substitute for Councillor Foster)
Councillor Welsh

Cabinet Member Present: Councillor Duggins

Employees Present: C. Dear (Chief Executive's Directorate)
J. Evans (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
M. Hanton (Chief Executive's Directorate)
G. Holmes (Chief Executive's Directorate)
P. Jennings (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
J. McLellan (Customer and Workforce Services Directorate)
C. Pearson (Chief Executive's Directorate)
T. Savill (Finance and Legal Services Directorate)
J. Venn (Chief Executive's Directorate)
A. West (Chief Executive's Directorate)

Apologies: Councillor Blundell
Councillor Foster
Councillor Skipper (absent on other Scrutiny Business)

Public Business

54. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

55. Minutes

- (a) The Minutes of the meeting held on 7th November, 2012 were signed as a true record, subject to the addition of Councillor Abbott to the list of Members appointed to the Task and Finish Group to progress the work on outside bodies, as detailed in Minute 50.
- (b) Further to Minute 48, headed "Section 106 Agreements and Community Infrastructure Levy", it was confirmed that information regarding the Section 106 Agreement funding process had been circulated to Elected Members.

56. **Medium Term Financial Strategy 2013-16**

The Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources), Councillor Duggins, introduced the item at the meeting.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Legal Services on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), which had previously been considered by Cabinet, and would also be submitted to Council on the 15th January, 2013.

The context in which the City Council developed its MTFS continued to be one of unprecedented pressures. The recent recession and the sovereign debt crises that developed out of the 2008 banking crisis meant that economic growth was forecast to be subdued for the foreseeable future. Significant reductions in spending levels would be required up to 2020. In practice, the process of reducing spend had only just started. Although the 2010 government spending review covered the period to 2014/15, the spending totals for 2013/14 onwards would almost certainly be revised downwards.

In addition, the last year had seen a review of the entire Local Government Finance system, with the localisation of 50% of business rates being the headline change. This created significant uncertainty, both in forecasting the level of resources that would be available, but also at a policy level.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Member and officers on aspects of the report and particularly in relation to:

- The setting of Business Rates
- Economic Growth
- Financial position for each Directorate
- Generation of Capital Receipts
- Safeguarding – Identification of risks

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that Cabinet be informed that the Committee do not have any comments to make.

57. **Transformation Programme – Partnership Progress Report**

The Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources), Councillor Duggins, introduced the item at the meeting.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which set out what had been achieved in the first half of this year, what was planned as the Council moved into the next phase of the Transformation Programme, and how the Programme was contributing to the significant challenges facing the City Council.

The Committee questioned the Cabinet Members and Officers on aspects of the report and particularly in relation to:

- Monitor and review after Financial Service Reviews
- Engagement of Staff in the process
- Member engagement
- Arrangements for the transfer of Public Health
- Long term impact on the City Council

- Opportunity to do things differently
- Communication of change
- City Deal
- Partnership working with Warwickshire

RESOLVED that the progress made in delivering specific reviews in the Transformation Programme be noted.

58. Transformation Programme – Scrutiny Engagement

The Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources), Councillor Duggins, introduced the item at the meeting.

The Committee considered a Briefing Note of the Assistant Director (Scrutiny) which summarised recent and planned Scrutiny engagement with the programme of Fundamental Service Reviews that make up the Council's transformation programme and accompanied the Transformation Programme Progress Report which was also considered at the meeting (Minute 58 above refers).

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the Review of Neighbourhood Services be included in the Work Programme for the Streets and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4).

59. Council Plan Performance Report – Progress Half-Year 2012/2013

The Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources), Councillor Duggins, introduced the item at the meeting.

The Committee considered and noted a report by the Chief Executive which had previously been considered by the Cabinet, on the progress that had been made during the first half year of 2012/13, using the latest available performance information for a key set of headline indicators.

The Committee also received a detailed presentation by officers on the half year overall summary.

60. Performance of the Benefits Service for the period April 2012 – September 2012

The Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources), Councillor Duggins, introduced the item at the meeting.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Legal Services on the performance and developments within the benefits service during the period April to September 2012. The benefits service in Coventry administrators more than £150 million of housing and council tax benefit to more than 41,000 households. During the period April 2012 to September 2012 the service processed the average new claim for benefit in 26.3 days and processed the average notification of a change in circumstance in 23.4 days.

The Committee noted that the Community Support Grants Policy would be considered by the Health, Social Care and Welfare Reform Scrutiny Board (5).

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the Cabinet Member be informed that the Committee did not have any further comments to make.

61. Performance within the Revenues Service for the period April 2012 – September 2012

The Cabinet Member (Strategic Finance and Resources), Councillor Duggins, introduced the item at the meeting.

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance and Legal Services which provided an update on performance and developments within the revenue service during the period 1st April, 2012, to 30th September, 2012.

The revenue service was responsible for the collection of more than £117 million of non-domestic rates from 8,000 properties and more than £90 million of corporate income.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the Cabinet Member be informed that the Committee did not have any further comments to make.

62. Report Back on Civic Visit to Jinan and Beijing, China

The Committee noted a report by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Sawdon, on his civic visit to Jinan and Beijing, and the positive outcomes it achieved.

The Committee also noted that there were tangible benefits that could flow from this trip and in particular the Lord Mayor's Office in conjunction with Council officers and the China Liaison Office of Coventry Chamber of Commerce and UKTI, would be:-

- (i) investigating and publicising the opportunities for Coventry students to attend Jinan University through the exchange programme
- (ii) meeting with Severn Trent Water plc (STW) to make them aware of potential business opportunities that may be available to them in Jinan through water recycling technology and, if appropriate, arrange to introduce STW to Jinan CPC officials through a trade mission.
- (iii) Contacting the RSC Swan Orchestra to assess the feasibility of including Jinan in their 2014 Chinese tour.

63. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee Work Programme 2012/2013

The Committee noted the Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2012/13.

64. Outstanding Issues

Outstanding issues were included in the Work Programme.

65. Meeting Evaluation

The Committee evaluated the meeting and concluded that it went well. They would have preferred shorter presentations with the slides being circulated prior to the meeting to enable questions to be prepared in advance. However, although the agenda was full they appreciated that there was a timeline for the reports to be considered.

Members requested that their complaint regarding the low temperature in the room be referred to Facilities Management.

66. Any Other Items of Public Business.

The Committee noted the following items of other public business which would be the subject of future reports:-

- (i) Houses in Multiple Occupation
- (ii) Olympic Legacy
- (iii) Outside Bodies
- (iv) Audit Committee

Private Business

Nil

(Meeting closed at: 12.30 p.m.)