

HARBOROUGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE SCRUTINY PANEL – RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

held in the Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough

9th December 2010

commencing at 6.30p.m.

Present:
Councillor Pain (Chairman).

Councillors: Evans, B. Johnson, P. Knowles and B. Smith.

Officers: V. Wenham, R. Chambers, E. O'Neill, K. Mehta, E. Bird and D. Peacock.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fuchs, Hart and Mrs. Page.

409 NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTION

Councillor King substituted for Councillor Mrs. Page.

410 MINUTES

RESOLVED that: the Minutes of the Meeting of the Scrutiny Panel – Resource Development held on 11th November 2010 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a true record.

411 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

None were received.

412 TOP-UP ENERGY GRANTS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY

E. Bird, Environmental Health Team Leader, introduced this report. The purpose of the report was to update members on the number of Top-up Energy Grants that have been awarded since the revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy came into operation in April 2010.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the Council's revised Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy came into operation on the 1st April 2010 and introduced a range of financial assistance to homeowners to enable them to carry out essential repairs to their property when they would have found it difficult to secure funding through commercial sources.
- (ii) the policy introduced Top-up Energy Grants to assist residents who have been awarded financial assistance through the Government's Warmfront scheme, where the amount of grant did not cover the total cost of work.
- (iii) at the Scrutiny Panel for Resources on the 9th June 2009 Members requested a review of the take-up of these grants once the scheme had been in operation for some time.
- (iv) Warmfront grants are available to vulnerable households where a member of the household is on either a disability- or income-related benefit.
- (v) a grant from Warmfront includes a package of insulation and heating measures up to a maximum value of £3,500; this increases to £6,000 for homes that need oil central heating.
- (vi) between January 2010 and September 2010 Warmfront has received 62 referrals for energy efficiency works from residents in Harborough District and has carried out in

- excess of £127,000 worth of energy improvement measures which includes 25 gas boilers, one Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG) boiler and three electric heating systems.
- (vii) since the introduction of the Top-up Energy Grants in April 2010 the Council has approved two grants for residents where the cost of the Warmfront allocation was greater than the cost of works. The value of the Top-up grants awarded was approximately £1,200 and £600 respectively. One of these grants has been completed and works are still outstanding on the other.
 - (viii) whilst the number of grants awarded is low, having the facility to top-up Warmfront assistance is a useful and cost-effective tool to enable vulnerable households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) a brief advert be placed in the Council's TalkBack magazine and Council Tax Bills to help promote the scheme.
- (ii) the Executive take into account Top-up Energy Grants when setting the budget for the coming year.

413 SHARED LEGAL SERVICES

V. Wenham, Head of legal Services, gave a review of the shared service agreement between Melton Borough Council and Harborough District Council. The shared posts are between the main Principle Solicitor (from March 2010) and two Officer posts. These staff are shared equally between the two authorities.

V. Wenham, Head of legal Services, itemised the individual legal costs that have been incurred by Harborough District Council over the period 2006/07 to 2009/10.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the Shared Service Agreement is a formal agreement between the two authorities and has been working well to date.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) V. Wenham, Head of Legal Services, provide further details of legal costs that have been incurred in individual cases (these were itemised at Appendix A of the report).
- (ii) K. Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive, provide further details of solicitor salary costs for the shared service and each Council department's legal budget.
- (iii) K. Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive, arrange a meeting with Councillor Knowles to explain the legal budgets for individual departments.
- (iv) the report be brought back to Scrutiny in one year's time. An elected Member from Melton Borough Council could attend this meeting to discuss the operation of the shared service.
- (v) V. Wenham, Head of Legal Services, provide a copy of the service level agreement, for the shared service, to the Panel.
- (vi) further details of monies recovered by the Council from prosecutions be provided to the Panel.

414 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2010

K. Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive, and R. Chambers, Financial Services, introduced this report. The purpose of the report was to update the Panel on the progress of schemes within the Capital Programme up to 30th September 2010.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) monitoring of actual capital expenditure against the approved budget is undertaken on a monthly basis with Budget Managers and reported to the Management Board on a quarterly basis. Members also have access to quarterly capital monitoring reports via the TEN Performance Management System.
- (ii) the original Capital Programme for 2010/11 totalled £1,430,100 and was approved by the Council on 25 February 2010. Members agreed 'carry forwards' from 2009/10 on 28 June 2010 of £1,613,000. Additional funding of £67,900 was approved by Members on 16 August 2010.
- (iii) actual expenditure and commitments to the end of September 2010 total £1,492,984 against the full year budget of £3,135,500, representing a variance of £1,642,516 at this point in the year.
- (iv) the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system project has been put on hold and no expenditure will take place in the present financial year.
- (iv) the upgrade of the CCTV Systems is presently underway.
- (v) the revised I.T. infrastructure project is on hold.

415 REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING TO 30th SEPTEMBER 2010

K. Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive, and R. Chambers, Financial Services, introduced this report. The purpose of the report was to provide information and actual expenditure and income against the 2010/11 Approved Budget for the period 1st April to 30th September 2010.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the cost of the Pay and Grading review, subject to a few outstanding appeals, stands at £477,045 which has been funded by the budget provision for the review of £325,000 in Central items and the balance from in-year savings. There is no overall change to the Council's budget as a result of these proposals, but there is an approved reduction in earmarked reserves of £90,000.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) future financial reports come to Scrutiny before Executive Meetings in order that the Scrutiny Panel can make recommendations prior to decisions being made.
- (ii) it be provided with a breakdown of the additional budget of £15,000 for CCTV system maintenance.

416 UPDATE ON THE PROCESS REGARDING RELOCATION WITH NHS PCT AT THE ST LUKE'S SITE

K. Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive, provided the Panel with an update regarding the Council Offices relocation project.

The Panel NOTED that:

- (i) the key decision point for the Council will be in March 2011 when it will need to determine, on the basis of the evaluations of submissions of bids, whether it will continue its involvement in the project to relocate with the NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland PCT to the St. Luke's Hospital site in Market Harborough.
- (ii) if the Council cannot continue with the current process, it will need to consider the options open to it then in the context of Executive Minute 132 of 28th June 2010.
- (iii) as part of the affordability for relocation the current offices building will have to feature in the proposals. The current process invites the bidders to include the offices in their proposals if they wish.
- (iv) in line with the revised project management procedures and guidelines, an internal project board has been constituted chaired by the Chief Executive. The other members of the Project Board are:

- Asset Management and Finance Portfolio Holder

- Deputy Chief Executive
- Head of Legal Services
- Head of Customer Services
- Facilities Manager.

The Panel RECOMMENDED that: K. Mehta, Deputy Chief Executive, provide a Briefing Note in the New Year to clarify the two options that are being proposed, and the full costs of each proposed project.

The Meeting ended at 9.10 p.m.