

RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THURSDAY 31 MARCH 2011 AT 10.05AM

PRESENT: Councillor Layden (Vice Chairman), Councillors Allison(from 11.10am) Boaden (until 11.35am), Bowditch, Bowman S, Craig, Hendry (from 10.15am), and Watson.

ALSO

PRESENT: Councillor J Mallinson – Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder (from 10.30am)

ROSP.22/11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence submitted.

ROSP.23/11 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in respect of the business to be considered.

ROSP.24/11 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2011 be agreed as a correct record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman and that the minutes of the meeting held on 17 February 2011 be noted

ROSP.25/11 CALL-IN OF DECISIONS

There were no items which had been the subject of call-in.

ROSP.26/11 OVERVIEW REPORT AND WORK PROGRAMME

The Overview and Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented report OS.10/11 which provided an overview of matters related to the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel's work. Also included was the latest version of the work programme and details of Forward Plan items relevant to this Panel.

Mrs Edwards reported:

- That the Forward Plan of Executive key decisions, covering the period 1 April 2011 to 31 July 2011 had been published on 18 March 2011 and was included in the Overview Report. There were three items in the Plan relevant to this Panel:
KD.007/11 – Replacement Pavement Sweepers
KD.011/11 – Options for vacated Bousteads grassing Offices

KD.010/11 – Provisional Outturn Reports 2010/11.

The Panel had previously agreed not to consider item KD.007/11.

The Panel asked for clarification with regard KD.011/11 and the Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director (Governance & Resources) (Dr Gooding) explained that the office staff had moved from Bousteads Grassing into the Civic Centre and the report would outline the options available and the relevant implications with regard to the future of the Boustead Grassing offices. The operational staff would remain at Bousteads Grassing. The Panel agreed that the report was operational and would not benefit from Overview and Scrutiny input.

Three references from the Executive were attached to the report:

EX.031/11 – Revised Procurement and Commissioning Strategy 2010-12

EX.034/11 – Amendment to Council Framework for Member Learning

EX.035/11 – Organisational Development Plan 2011 – 2013

- The report included information gathered by the Organisational Development Manager as requested by the Panel at its meeting on 17 February 2011.
- At its meeting on 3 November 2010 the Panel received an update on the review of the Essential Car Users Allowance which followed from a recommendation from the Lease Car Scheme Task and Finish Group. The Panel agreed that a further report would be presented to the Panel in March 2011. It had been agreed by the Chair of the Panel that the report would be deferred as the Authority were within the consultation period with affected staff on revised proposals for the essential/casual car user allowance scheme. The Consultation would end in mid-May and a report would then be presented to the Employment Panel in June 2011. Following the Employment Panel meeting report would then be considered by this Panel.
- Members of the Capital Project Task and Finish Group held a further meeting on 17th March 2011 to consider their draft recommendations. It was agreed that further amendments would be made to the recommendations which would then be reconsidered by the Group. It was agreed that the recommendations would be presented to the next meeting of the Panel on 16th June 2011.
- The joint meeting of the Scrutiny Chairs Group and the Executive had been rescheduled to take place on 5 April 2011. The protocol on the relationship between Overview and Scrutiny and Executive had been redrafted in discussion with the Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen and would be considered at the joint meeting.

RESOLVED – 1) That the Overview Report incorporating the Work Programme and Forward Plan items relevant to this Panel be noted.

2) That minute excerpts EX.031/10 – Revised Procurement and Commissioning Strategy 2010-12, EX.034/11 – Amendment to Council Framework for Member Learning and EX.035/11 – Organisational Development Plan 2011-13 from the Executive held on 14 March 2011 be noted.

3) That Forward Plan item KD.010/11 – 2010/11 Provisional Outturn Reports would be considered by the Panel at their meeting on 16 June 2011.

4) That Forward Plan item KD.011/11 – Options for vacated Bousteads Grassing offices would not be considered by the Panel at their meeting on 16 June 2011.

5) That the minutes from the Scrutiny Chairs Group held on 1 March 2011 be noted.

ROSP.27/11 PROJECT ASSURANCE GROUP

The Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director (Governance & Resources) (Dr Gooding) presented report CE.08/11 which set out the most recent summary of significant projects monitored by the Council's Project Assurance Group.

Dr Gooding reminded the Panel that the Project Assurance Group had an advisory and high level monitoring role in relation to the significant projects delivered by Carlisle City Council. The summary of significant project was set out in Appendix A of the report.

Dr Gooding reported that the number of capital projects was reducing as a result of the reduction in capital resources. The new projects emerging would be in response to the Transformation process and the need to review services and make significant savings. The Project Assurance Group would continue its advisory and monitoring role in relation to any significant projects within this programme of work and would keep Members informed of the projects.

The Panel considered each of the projects in turn and raised the following comments or questions:

Connect 2 Cycleway/Sustrans

- *Members were concerned about the public's perception of the project*
- *Was there an agreement or contract between the City Council and Sustrans regarding the financing of the project?*

Dr Gooding reminded the Panel that the requirements of Sustrans had increased the risks the Council would be taking and they began to outweigh the benefits of the project.

Mrs Edwards informed the Panel that the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel would be scrutinising a more detailed report on the project at their meeting on 7 April 2011.

- *What cost had the City Council incurred during the project?*

Dr Gooding agreed to provide a written response for Members.

- *The Panel hoped that lessons could be learned from this project to ensure that future projects succeeded.*

The Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder agreed that lessons did need to be learned from the project and there would be an investigation into what happened with the project.

Community Resources Centre

In response to a Members question Dr Gooding reported that the tendering process for the external managing agent had began and two parties had expressed an interest. Discussions were ongoing with both parties and a final decision had yet to be taken.

Housing Strategy 2010-11

- *A Member reminded the Panel of the statutory obligations the City Council had with regard to the Housing Strategy and hoped that the Council would not pare down the service but instead take a fundamental look as to where resources were and where they should be, he added that he hoped that Scrutiny were given the opportunity to look at the implications involved.*
- *The Regional Housing Grant had been £1.1m per annum what was the budget now for the Housing Strategy?*

The Financial Services Manager (Miss Taylor) responded that the Disabled Facilities Grant was £663,000 which matched the City Council's budget provision. There was no budget included in the 2011/12 budget for the overall Housing Strategy.

- *In light of the cuts that had been made to the budget, what were the implications for the Housing Strategy? There was concern that the Strategy could not be fulfilled given the budget available.*

Dr Gooding confirmed that the Council recognised that housing was tremendously important and a statutory requirement. He reminded the Panel that as well as the loss of the Regional Housing Grant, the £5m of the City Council capital reserves which had been allocated for a five year strategy was no longer available. The Communities, Housing & Health Manager was now in post and was tasked with the Housing Strategy and services plans. This item would be monitored and scrutinised by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

- *A Member understood the current financial constraints but urged the authority to begin developing a strategy for the future that could be implemented as soon as there was capital available.*

Replacement Women and Families Accommodation

- *The report stated that the project was on hold, was this correct?*

Dr Gooding responded that there had been a review of the service which ended on 31 March 2011. There had not been a significant delay to the project and he agreed to provide Members with an update.

In response to a question Dr Gooding reported that the funding from the Housing Strategy programme was allocated for the project, the balance would come from the existing hostel and this would be the risk.

Miss Taylor clarified that the authority would fund the expenditure until the capital receipt was received from the sale of the existing hostel.

Kingstown Industrial Estate

- *The report stated that the County Council would 'consider' adoption of the highway; did the City Council need a more formal commitment?*

Dr Gooding responded that the City Council was working closely with the County Council's Highways Engineer and did not consider the adoption of the highway as a risk.

- *A Member commented that the pavements within the Industrial Estates were often driven over by large vehicles and questioned whether the pavements in the area were a priority.*

- *Had the City Council checked if the County Council had a policy with regard to adopted highways on Industrial Estates?*

Dr Gooding agreed to discuss the matters with the Highways Services Manager and provide a response for the Panel.

Customer Contact Centre Shared Service

Dr Gooding updated the Panel on the project. He reported that the project was moving forward and it was becoming easier to provide a range of services within the Civic Centre. There were ongoing discussions regarding the business case. There were also a number of reviews underway and until there was some clarity from the reviews the business case would not be formalised. He added that the primary benefit for the City Council was the shared telephony arrangements.

- *A Member raised some concerns regarding shared services and highlighted a recent press article concerning potential shared services with Eden District Council. He stated that it was vital that any shared service that would be implemented had to be sustainable and able to continue throughout any political changes.*

Dr Gooding clarified that any decision on an offer of partnership for shared services from other District Councils would be taken through the same process as any other decision the Council had to take and that would include input from Scrutiny.

The Governance and Resources Portfolio Holder agreed that any decision about the future of the City Council would be made by the Council at the relevant time.

- *The County Council had recently gone out to tender for an IT system, had there been any consultation with the City Council in preparation for the Customer Contact Shared Service?*

Dr Gooding informed the Panel that the County Council had consulted with the City Council and in particular with ICT Connect on the new IT system.

Historic Quarter – Castle Street Public Realm Improvements/Carlisle Roman Gateway Project

- *Had there been any consideration given to the future maintenance and cleanliness of the stone paving used in the pedestrianised area?*

Dr Gooding confirmed that the matter had been raised and the Environmental Services team had been made aware that the maintenance would be included in their programme of work in the future. He added that although the Authority was aware of the need for future maintenance there was no additional budget for it.

Tullie House Trust

- *There was no detail within the project text with regard to the future risk surrounding the Trust's ability to apply for funding.*

Dr Gooding explained that the project had been to establish Trust status for Tullie House, when the Trust was established that was the end of the project. The risk associated with the Trust's applications for funding were future risks and not risks under this specific project. Dr Gooding highlighted the action for the Tullie House Trust Project and explained that the Corporate Projects Group felt that the future performance monitoring of the trust arrangements did need to be considered. He agreed to put an update on the monitoring arrangements in the next report to the Panel.

RESOLVED – 1) That Report CE.08/11 Project Assurance Group be welcomed;

2) That the Panel looked forward to more detailed information from officers as outlined in the minutes above.

ROSP.28/11 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT

The Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director (Governance & Resources) (Dr Gooding) submitted report CE.09/11 regarding the Corporate Risk Register.

Dr Gooding explained that the risks associated with delivering the Corporate Plan had recently been reviewed by the Senior Management Team and the Corporate Risk Management Group and the risks were detailed in the report.

He added that the Corporate Risk Register identified the risk rating score for the target risk as requested previously by the Panel. The cover of the Corporate Risk Register reflected the corporate styles and showed the corporate priorities, objectives and outcomes that the register supported.

In considering the report Members raised the following comments or questions:

- *Were all projects included in the report at risk?*

Dr Gooding responded that all of the projects within the risk register were considered to be at risk, when a project was no longer at risk it was not included in the risk register.

- *The Panel thanked officers for the report which was well written and easy to understand.*
- *Was the Council achieving a balanced housing market?*

Dr Gooding explained that it was difficult to achieve the Housing Strategy with the limited resources available to the Authority and there was a significant risk attached to being the Strategic Housing Authority in such circumstances.

- *The report showed the Use of Resources and Assets at the target risk rating. The Asset Business Plan had been agreed, what were the timescales for moving forward and how would it be brought back to the Panel?*

Dr Gooding reminded the Panel that the Asset Business Plan had included a broad timetable. The Project Group would deliver the project and progress would be reported back to the Panel, having a Business Plan did not take away the risk. He added that the biggest risk in the Plan was the land at Morton and the Council was in the process of tendering for an agent to act on the City Council's behalf.

Following a further question Dr Gooding reported that the Council had tendered for a managing agent instead of using the consultant who had prepared the Business Plan to comply with the European Procurement Directive and because it was good to expose organisations the Council used to competition. He reminded the Panel that the purpose of the Business Plan was, primarily, to generate revenue and, as he had reported at previous Panels, once the Plan had been agreed by Council it would be moved forward as a programme of work by officers with the agreement of Executive and in relevant areas, taking into account the views of Ward Councillors. Large sites would be brought through the full Council process, including Overview and Scrutiny, for decision.

Dr Gooding explained that the portfolio had been divided into three types; Operational, Economic Development and Investment and the intention was to generate income to protect the services that were under threat, the economic aspect was considered by the Economic Development portfolio.

A Member asked if it would be possible for an officer to email Councillors to inform them of land that was being sold and which Ward Councillors had been notified. This

would give all Councillors the opportunity to feedback any relevant knowledge about the site to the Ward Councillors and allow the Executive to make an informed decision.

RESOLVED – That the Corporate Risk Management report be welcomed.

ROSP.29/11 DRAFT SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

The Scrutiny Officer (Mrs Edwards) presented the Draft Scrutiny Annual Report (report OS.07/11).

Mrs Edwards explained that the Report aimed to summarise the work carried out in the Civic year and to discuss issues for the future. Comments made by the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels will be used to amend the draft before it is considered by the Scrutiny Chairs Group. Following the Chairs Group the report will then be submitted to Council for consideration.

Mrs Edwards outlined the layout of the report and drew Members attention to part 2 of the report which gave a summary of the progress made with regard to the recommendations which arose from the review of the scrutiny process. Mrs Edwards asked the Panel for their opinion on the implementation of the recommendations and asked them to give their comments for insertion into the 2010/11 update.

The Panel agreed with the comments made by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel and asked for more detail to be included in the Task and Finish Group recommendation. They felt that it would be useful to look at the model used by Cumbria County Council for Task and Finish Groups and, if applicable, include any good practice into the City Council's Task and Finish Group model.

RESOLVED –That the Panel agreed with the comments and resolution of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel for incorporation into the Scrutiny Annual Report in conjunction with recommendations made by the Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

ROSP.30/11 MEMBERS COMMENTS

The Members of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel thanked the Chairman for his continued dedication and hard work throughout the year.

The Chairman thanked the Members of the Panel for their support and enthusiasm throughout the year and thanked the Scrutiny Officer for her continued support and advice.

(The meeting ended at 11.45am)