

AT A MEETING of the POLICY AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle Winchester on Thursday, 19 April 2012.

**PRESENT**

Chairman:  
p Councillor Carol Leversha

Vice-Chairman  
p Councillor Keith Evans

Councillors:

p Ray Bolton	a Elaine Still
p Adrian Collett	p Bruce Tennent
p Liz Fairhurst	p Chris Thomas
a Brian Gurden	p Pat West
p Robin McIntosh	a Sharyn Wheale

In attendance at the invitation of the Chairman: Cllr Ray Ellis, Executive Member for Economic Development and Rural Affairs

104. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

It was noted that the following Members had given their apologies for this meeting: Cllr Elaine Still, Cllr Sharyn Wheale, Cllr Brian Gurden.

105. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally at the time of the debate declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

106. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Policy & Resources Select Committee Meeting held on 19 January 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

- In relation to questions on the Capital Programme it was reported that responses had been circulated as requested, and Members confirmed they were satisfied with the answers provided.

- Regarding Adult Services feedback on procurement of temporary agency staff, it was noted that this would be addressed under Item 8 on this agenda.
- Regarding the Community Infrastructure Levy topic, it was noted that this had been covered at a recent Member Briefing.
- Regarding the initiation of a review of consultation, it was noted that initial scoping had identified that work was already underway to consolidate corporate guidance on consultation good practice, which would be covered under Item 7 on this agenda.

#### 107. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that the newly developed Corporate Grants Database was due to launch shortly, and indicated that from the training she had received she was pleased to report that the new system would provide the functionality required.

#### 108. **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The Director of Economy Transport and Environment gave a presentation (see Item 5 in the Minute Book) regarding the current landscape for Economic Development and how the County Council was positioning itself in this area. It was noted that a report to Cabinet in June 2011 gave the background, however it was acknowledged that this was a fast moving area and there had been change since then.

It was noted that the Coalition Government wanted business to have a strong voice in economic development, for example through Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) which were Chaired by business representatives. It was reported that Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) had previously been involved in Economic Development, but had been closed in April 2011, and the funding previously channelled through the RDAs was not being redirected through other bodies.

The Regional Growth Fund was available for Capital Projects, and the Solent LEP had been successful in accessing funding this way. It was noted that the County Council would work with different LEPs as necessary, as there were two within the Hampshire administrative area, and cross border collaboration with other LEPs was likely to take place.

Members discussed opportunities within current structures to access funding for infrastructure improvements. It was noted that Hampshire had been successful at drawing on developer contributions, however under the new Community Infrastructure Levy it was anticipated that it would be more difficult to access developer funding for infrastructure. It was suggested that private capital markets may come to the fore, and that the County Council may need to adapt its approach to scheme packaging and bid preparation in order to bid successfully into this market.

Members asked how easy it was for small businesses to win contracts with the County Council. It was noted that the County Council had won an award for the support provided to small businesses in relation to contracts. However when making contracting decisions small businesses may not be able to provide the scale or match the cost base the County Council required. It was suggested that this be considered a possible future topic for the committee to consider in further detail.

Scope for small businesses to work with the County Council – add to work programme

The Chairman invited the Executive Member for Economic Development and Rural Affairs to comment and he spoke of the partnership working such as the Greater Wessex Rural and Farming Network and cross border collaboration taking place on economic development issues.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee supports the approach being taken to economic development activity in Hampshire.

109. **BUSINESS RATES RETENTION**

The County Treasurer gave a presentation to summarise the key points in the report (see Item 6 in the Minute Book) regarding the proposals of the Coalition Government for Local Authorities to retain a proportion of business rates. It was reported that under the proposed system all County Council's would be 'top up' authorities, the effect of which would be that the County Council would be partially protected from the impact of variations in business rates collected.

It was noted that due to the 'central share' retained by central government it could be argued that the policy was not truly as 'localist' as it was first billed. The estimates given in Appendix 2 to the report illustrated that with potential business rates raised in Hampshire of £437 million, £287 million would be retained by central government.

It was reported that the new system was due to start in April 2013, however many details were still to be announced, and no local authority would benefit in 13/14 and 14/15 due to the local government funding limits set by the 2010 spending review. It was indicated that the modelling showed that Hampshire County Council had the potential to benefit from the proposed system, compared to the previous 2% funding increase experienced. However, the proposed system posed significant risks for District Council's as business rates could change from year to year, which would hamper their financial planning.

The main area of concern for the County Council was the proposal to 're set' the system every 10 years and the perverse incentives this could present. It was suggested that the County Council may wish to pursue a budget strategy that did not rely too heavily on anticipated business rates, in order to plan based on a stable financial footing.

The Chairman recommended that all Members of the County Council be briefed on this topic.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee thanked the officer for the clear explanation of the proposed system.

110. **VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER**

The Chief Executive and Director of Economy Transport and Environment gave a presentation (see Item 7 in the Minute Book) regarding work underway in relation to customer interaction with the County Council and how the County Council consults.

It was reported that various elements of the customer experience of the County Council were being addressed, such as managing expectations regarding a resolution to avoid repeat calls, using language the public understand rather than jargon, and using access channels appropriate to the demographics that use the service. Members commented that it was important to maintain 'human contact' as an option for those who preferred this type of interaction.

It was noted that work was underway on customer journey mapping to understand the stages the public go through to access what they need, with a view to expanding the ability of the Council to capture information about customers once and re-use it (while abiding by data protection laws). It was indicated that a monthly

The Business Rates Retention scheme be added as a future topic for the Members Briefing Programme

performance report of calls received through hantsdirect was available on hantsnet (the County Council's intranet).

Regarding consultation, it was reported that abiding by the relevant statutory or published standards on consultation was important as there had been examples recently of consultation processes being successfully challenged legally. It was suggested that flexibility was required for Departments to adapt consultation processes to suit the topic, however there was potential scope for corporate guidance on factors to consider.

Members commented that it would be beneficial to 'road test' consultation documents on members of the public to test the language used, prior to launch of a consultation. It was suggested that Departments could consider using the relevant Select Committee Members to test draft consultation materials, similar to the role the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee played in relation to NHS consultations.

It was noted that the County Council would in future be required to publish a 'stakeholder engagement schedule' which would list upcoming consultations and contracts due to be re-let, the first of which was due to be published online shortly.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee supports the development of corporate guidance on consultation covering the aspects identified in the presentation.

That the Officers be thanked for the update.

111. **SCRUTINY PANEL: PROCUREMENT OF TEMPORARY AGENCY STAFF**

The Chairman referred to a handout that had been circulated to Members, providing a further update from Adult Services following Members questions at the January meeting of the committee. Officers from Adult Services were in attendance to provide further clarity.

It was confirmed that staff had only been granted Voluntary Redundancy if their post was no longer required, in which case they would not be re-employed to the same role through an agency. As there had been a recruitment freeze during the organisational change process, agency staff had been used to back fill gaps resulting from normal turn over of staff during this time.

It was also confirmed that if an individual did not arrive when an agency worker had been booked, the agency would be informed not to provide that individual to the organisation again.

It was noted that Adults Services had developed an internal bank of temporary staff to use in preference to agency staff and that this was working well. Members were supportive of this approach, as per the findings of the Panel that had considered this topic.

RESOLVED:

That the Select Committee are satisfied with the response received.

112. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEES**

The Chairman presented for approval the annual report of each of the Select Committees (see Item 9 in the Minute Book).

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Function is approved by the Select Committee for submission to County Council by the Chairman.

The annual report be submitted to County Council by the Chairman

113. **SYSTEMS SUPPORTING THE SCRUTINY FUNCTION**

The Chairman invited the Chairman of the Safe & Healthy People Select Committee to report on the Risk Register Group operated in support of the work of this committee.

Cllr Pat West reported that herself, the Opposition Spokesperson for Adult Services and another member of the committee, met prior to each Select Committee meeting with senior officers from Adult Services to review the Risk Register. This enabled the Select Committee to monitor the work of the department to manage risk areas. This meant the Select Committee were able to make comments to the relevant Executive Member during the year, and had greater confidence in and understanding of the budget proposals when these were considered.

RESOLVED:

That other Select Committee Chairmen consider whether such an approach would be of value in relation to other Departments with significant risks.

114. **PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHING A TASK AND FINISH GROUP: HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE PANEL ON ADULT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

The Chairman presented for approval the proposed Terms of Reference for a working group of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Adult Mental Health Services (see Item 11 in the Minute Book).

RESOLVED:

That the working group on Adult Mental Health Services be approved.

115. **WORK PROGRAMME AND ONGOING WORK ACROSS ALL SCRUTINY COMMITTEES**

The Chairman went through the committee's future work programme and invited Members views regarding the items listed.

The Chairman proposed the following:

- that the HR update due to the Autumn meeting include an update on the impact of the new sickness absence policy
- That the topic on the Voluntary Sector be further scoped to identify a focus
- That the topic of contracting be scoped to identify focus

RESOLVED:

- That the Committee's Work Programme be approved subject to the amendments made at this meeting.

That the work programme be updated

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Chairman, 26 July 2012