

AT A MEETING of the POLICY AND RESOURCES SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle Winchester on Thursday, 22 July 2010.

PRESENT

Chairman:
p Councillor Keith Chapman

Vice-Chairman
p Councillor Keith Evans

Councillors:

p Adrian Collett	a Elaine Still
a Brian Gurden	p Bruce Tennent
p Robin McIntosh	a Chris Thomas
a Anna McNair Scott	p Pat West
a Stephen Reid	p Sharyn Wheale

Also in attendance: Cllr Ken Thornber, Leader of the Council, in relation to item under discussion as part of Chairman's Communications. Cllr Ann Buckley in relation to Item 5.

40. **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.

No interests were declared at this meeting.

41. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Committee held on 11 March 2010 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

42. **CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chairman reported that he had received a request from Cllr Bruce Tennent regarding adding an item to the

agenda for discussion at this committee on the Special Recognition Awards made to Chief Officers in 2008/9. The Chairman confirmed that the Leader had made a statement about this issue at Full Council on 15 July, which clearly set out the basis upon which these payments had been made, consistent with the County Council's policies.

The Chairman invited Cllr Tennent to comment, and Cllr Tennent indicated that he would like further information. The Chairman invited the Leader to comment and he outlined the process that had been followed. He re-affirmed his commitment to transparency in all decision making and invited the committee to consider how this may best be achieved in matters such as this in the future. It was noted the constitution was currently under review and could be strengthened in this area. He also offered Cllr Tennent the opportunity to meet with the Director of Human Resources in order to better understand the County Council's policies relating to payments to staff.

Arrangements be made for Cllr Tennent to have a briefing with the Director of HR.

RESOLVED

- a) Cllr Tennent accepted the invitation of the Leader for a personal briefing from the Director of HR on the detail of the relevant County Council Policies
- b) The Committee agreed to give this matter further consideration at its next meeting and provide recommendations for strengthening the constitution in this area.

43. **PRESENTATION FROM CITIZENS ADVICE HAMPSHIRE**

The Independent Chair and Development Officer from Citizens Advice Hampshire gave a presentation regarding the work of this organisation, and how it supports the County Council's aims and objectives. It was reported that Citizens Advice Hampshire worked across the County, providing support to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) offices throughout the County. The County Council provided a grant to Citizen's Advice Hampshire, this year £112,655. This funded a five day a week telephone consultancy service for volunteer advisers, and a training programme for CAB staff and volunteers. Only 9% of their expenditure went towards the Development Officer and governance of the body.

It was noted that since 2008 Citizens Advice Hampshire had brought in over £1.9 million additional funding to the County, equivalent to a 1:8 ratio from the funding provided by the County Council. It was also recognised that the work of CAB was a key preventative service, with the example provided of 114 housing evictions prevented over the past year. It was reported that it had been estimated that evictions cost the public purse approximately £30,000 a time.

The benefit of having a body to support CAB county wide was demonstrated, as this had enabled joint working, for example provision of a translation and interpretation service CAB offices could access, shared telephone advice services and support for preparation of bids for grant funding.

It was noted that CAB benefit from a large volunteer base, and are reliant on local government funding for around 60% of their budget. It was also reported that CAB are working with Macmillan to provide advice to people with cancer, and liaising with Adults Services regarding their potential role in providing advice in relation to personalisation of social care services.

RESOLVED:

Members re-affirmed their commitment to supporting Citizens Advice services, recognising the important role they play, and thanked the Chair and Development Officer for their time.

44. **FAIRTRADE MOTION FROM FULL COUNCIL**

The Directors of Environment and Property Business and Regulatory Services presented a joint report regarding the Fairtrade Motion put to Full Council in May 2010 which had been referred to this committee for consideration (see Item 5 in the Minute Book).

The Chairman invited Cllr Buckley, who had proposed the motion at Full Council, to comment. Cllr Buckley highlighted that currently 46% of the population of Hampshire lived in areas that qualified for Fairtrade status, and that this percentage was likely to go beyond the % required for Fairtrade County status (50%) soon, as Basingstoke and Eastleigh were working on achieving Fairtrade status in their areas. She suggested it would be an accolade to be the first Fairtrade County in the South East.

It was noted that Council had asked the committee to

consider three particular points. Point 1 was regarding confirmation that as far as practicable, the beneficiaries of Fairtrade initiatives currently supported by the County Council were those for whom the benefits were intended. It was reported that there is ample evidence the Fairtrade programme had made a sustained difference to many workers and their communities. The Fairtrade Foundation had recently received the Queen's Award for Enterprise (Sustainable Development), which demonstrated that Fairtrade was now recognised as making a tangible difference to the livelihood of people within some of the world's poorest regions.

Referred point 2 sought assurance that the measures required for Hampshire County to achieve Fairtrade status would not be to the detriment of Hampshire producers of goods and services. It was suggested that Fairtrade status could be achieved with minimal further steps, however Members were concerned that the required promotion of Fairtrade would encourage giving preference to Fairtrade over local producers.

The third point the committee considered was whether the Fairtrade measures already adopted by the County Council, or those additional measures that would be required to be adopted to achieve Fairtrade status, provided appropriate value for money. It was noted that the report suggested that the fair-trade products the County Council currently procures provide value for money, as the additional cost compared to other products was minimal, and given the County Council's commitment to Fairtrade principles (agreed following Cllr Buckley's 2005 motion to full council) this could be considered good value for money. The Director of Property Business and Regulatory Services provided examples to support this point. However, Members were concerned, given the current economic climate, about how much more fair-trade items cost, and requested further detail on this point.

Members agreed with the position in the report that should the County wish to go forward for Fairtrade County status, the County Council would not need to lead the required steering group, although the County Council would wish to be a part of such a group. However, Members requested clarification regarding what could be done to ensure support was provided to a balance of producers including local producers.

Following the discussion, Members agreed to report back to full Council as follows:

The points agreed by the committee be reported back to the next available Full Council meeting.

RECOMMENDED:

With regard to referred point 1, the committee confirms that there is good evidence to support the view that the beneficiaries of Fairtrade are those for whom the benefits are intended.

With regard to referred point 2, further information is required for the committee to come to a conclusion regarding if Hampshire gaining fair-trade status as a county would be to the detriment of Hampshire producers.

With regard to referred point 3, further information is required for the committee to come to a view regarding whether the fair-trade measures currently adopted by the County Council, and any further steps required to achieve Fairtrade County status, represent value for money.

Therefore, in response to the motion put to Full Council, which calls on Hampshire County Council to take the necessary remaining steps to become the first Fairtrade County in South East England, the committee is of the view that further steps should not be taken until the following have been considered:

- details of fair-trade products currently procured, including prices compared to alternatives, the proportion of spend on these products, and the proportion of spend on products from local producers.
- clarity regarding the implications for the County Council of the requirements for Fairtrade County status (what further steps would be required, noting that the County Council need not be the lead authority in relation to a Fairtrade County application)
- what action the County Council could take, in parallel to support for Fairtrade, to ensure local producers and other ethical brands are supported even handedly.

Should Full Council request that this committee follow up the information identified, the Scrutiny Officer liaise with Property Business and Regulatory Services regarding the committee considering a further report as part of their future work programme

45. **CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Chief Executive gave a presentation regarding the Corporate Improvement Plan for 2010/11 (see Item 6 in the Minute Book). It was reported that the new Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP) had been approved by Cabinet in February 2010, and at that time Cabinet requested that the appropriate Select Committee consider the CIP.

The new CIP was more focused, and arranged into three categories for corporate monitoring:- 'Hard to Move', the 'Corporate Basket' and the 'Hot List'.

The 'Hard to Move' areas were issues which required a step change in performance in order to reach the desired standard. For example, the educational attainment of children in care and the number of young people not in education, employment or training. Progress with these issues was regularly reported to the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet.

The 'Corporate Basket' contained areas of importance to the County Council, at which we were currently performing well but were being monitored corporately to ensure continuous improvement. The 'Corporate Basket' included achievement of 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE (including English and Maths) and amount of municipal waste landfilled.

The 'Hot List' included areas the County Council considered of corporate importance and wished to improve, which were as yet not clearly defined or didn't have specific targets. Items on the 'Hot List' include 'Reducing inequalities' and 'Community Leadership and Strong Communities'.

It was recognised that the challenge for the future would be to maintain and improve performance while making efficiency savings. It was reported that work was ongoing to strengthen links between budget planning and performance outcomes to support decision making.

It was acknowledged that the current CIP was agreed in February, and would need to be revised given the emerging financial context following the change of National Government in June.

RESOLVED:

a) The committee note the current arrangements for the Corporate Improvement Plan.

b) The committee be updated as appropriate if significant changes are made to the CIP.

46. **FINAL ACCOUNTS AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY**

The County Treasurer presented a report (see Item 7 in the Minute Book) regarding the Medium Term Financial

An update on the Corporate Improvement Plan be added to the committee's future work programme, for re-consideration if appropriate, should significant changes be made.

Strategy (as considered by Cabinet in May) and the End of Year Financial Report for 2009/10 (as considered by Cabinet in June). It was noted that the financial context had moved on since these reports had been written, as a result of recent announcements by central government. The County Treasurer offered to provide an update on the financial situation at the next meeting of the committee.

An update on the financial situation be considered for inclusion on the agenda of the next committee meeting.

Members were invited to consider the information provided, with a view to identifying potential topics for future scrutiny.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

47. **UPDATE – REVIEW OF THE SEVERE WINTER WEATHER EXPERIENCED IN 2009/10**

The Chairman updated Members on the progress made to date with the review of the Severe Winter Weather Experienced in 2009/10 initiated by this committee at the January 2010 meeting. It was noted that a report on the progress made would be considered by Cabinet on 26 July, and that it was proposed to provide the final report including recommendations to the September 2010 Cabinet meeting.

RESOLVED:

The committee notes the progress made with the Severe Winter Weather Review and notes the planned timescale for completion.

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

The Chief Executive presented a report (see Item 9 in the Minute Book) providing a summary of the work of all the Hampshire County Council Select Committee's from April 2009 to March 2010.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report of the Select Committees be submitted to Full Council in September, as per the constitution.

49. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chief Executive presented the committee's work programme for 2010, as of July 2010 (Item 10 in the Minute Book). It was noted that the committee had a large number of potential items on the work programme. Members discussed the importance of prioritising items for consideration at the quarterly meetings. It was suggested that consideration be given to alternative methods to circulate items that are 'for information'.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's Work Programme be approved, subject to any issues raised at this meeting.

Scrutiny Officer to update the work programme