

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
CORPORATE BUSINESS SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, WALLFIELDS, HERTFORD
ON TUESDAY, 4 DECEMBER 2007 AT
7.40 PM

PRESENT: Councillor J O Ranger (Chairman).
Councillors R Beeching, R N Copping, K Darby,
R Gilbert, A M Graham, J Mayes, M Pope,
S Rutland-Barsby, J Warren.

ALSO PRESENT:

Councillor D Clark, A P Jackson, W Quince,
M Wood.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Anne Freimanis	- Chief Executive
Linda Bevan	- Committee Secretary
Karl Chui	- Trainee Performance Officer
Tony Hall	- Head of Business Support Services
Philip Hamberger	- Director of Internal Services
Will O'Neill	- Head of Community and Cultural Services
George A Robertson	- Director of Customer and Community Services
Neil Sloper	- Head of Customer Services and New Media
Joy Stevenson	- Scrutiny Officer

395 APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor N Clark
and N Wilson.

RESOLVED ITEMS

ACTION

396 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Councillor J O Ranger proposed and Councillor R Gilbert seconded that Councillor A M Graham be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED - that Councillor A M Graham be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee.

397 REPORT OF PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

It was reported that a task and finish group had been set up to examine the Council's use of performance indicators (PIs). The group had tried to ensure PIs were contributing towards the Council's priorities. These priorities had been used to identify the key performance indicators for monitoring. The group had decided to concentrate on three service areas of leisure, car parking and customer services.

The group had recommended some new PIs and wished to reconvene to consider new PIs proposed by the Government in the New Year.

Members considered the recommendations and suggested some amendments. The Committee decided to inform the Executive that the group's recommendations should be accepted subject to the amendments discussed.

The Committee also thought all Scrutiny Committees should consider which PIs it should review quarterly.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee considers that:

(A) the recommendations of the Performance Indicators Task and Finish Group should be agreed, as amended; and

(B) the Scrutiny Committees should examine which performance indicators are appropriate for each Committee to review on a quarterly basis.

398 DIVISIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS ROUND 1 - REVENUE ESTIMATES - PROBABLE 2007/08: ESTIMATE 2008/09

A report on Round 1 of the revenue estimates was submitted by the Executive Member for Resources and Internal Support. These estimates related to the costs of the Chief Executive's division, three service directorates and cost of offices. These costs would be fully allocated to service estimates in line with time spent by staff on each area of activity in the next round of the budget process.

The probable outturn was £76,000 less than the original estimate, excluding capital charges. This was largely due to a reduction in employee costs and increased income eg Smoke Free Environment Grant.

Members noted that medium term financial planning was being developed and would help with budget planning once Service Plans had been finalised.

The Committee agreed to recommend that the estimates be approved.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee considers the indicative revenue estimates for the Divisional Establishments for 2007/08 - Probable outturn and 2008/09 estimate as at Appendix A of the report now submitted should be approved subject to subsequent amendments on staffing levels when the Services Plans are approved.

399 VALUING FEEDBACK - UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTING CORPORATE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

The Head of Customer Services and New Media submitted a report on introducing a procedure for the whole Authority to cover complaints, compliments and comments. This would be included in training to ensure excellent customer service. It had been produced in response to an outstanding CPA short-term action to implement a corporate complaints procedure.

All customer feedback would be captured by the new system and the complaints process would be simplified. Directors would appoint dedicated staff to deal with the system. A manual detailing the procedure would be produced and there would be an ongoing launch of the procedure.

Members noted the need to include positive feedback in the future and apply a uniform system across the Authority.

The Committee decided to note the progress on the new procedure and endorse the actions proposed to implement it.

RESOLVED - that the progress in establishing a corporate customer feedback procedure as detailed in the report now submitted be noted and the actions proposed to implement the corporate customer feedback procedure in the next civic year, be endorsed.

400 SOCITM REPORT : ACTION PLAN

The Director of Internal Services submitted a report on progress on the implementation of recommendations in a report on IT services by the Society of Computer and Information Technology Managers (SOCITM).

Members noted the review would help address the concerns they had expressed about the service and the progress made on implementation of the recommendations.

RESOLVED - that the progress made on implementing the SOCITM action plan, be noted.

401 DATA SHARING PROTOCOL

A Member who was not a member of the Committee had asked for the data sharing protocol to be included on the agenda so the Committee could decide whether or not to scrutinise the protocol.

A report was to be considered on 18 December 2007 by the Executive which set out a generic data sharing protocol. This outlined information which was suitable for disclosure internally and externally with partners.

The protocol standardised the Council's approach to identifying reasons for sharing data, legislation, type of information and procedures.

Members noted the protocol would be adapted for specific purposes and decided to review the protocol when more detailed examples could be provided.

RESOLVED - that the Data Sharing Protocol be noted and added to the Work Programme for the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee for 2007/08.

402 WORK PROGRAMME 2007/08

The Committee considered items to be included in the work programme for 2007/08 and decided to add the items detailed below.

RESOLVED - that the following items be added to the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee work programme:

Quarterly report on Performance Indicators

Corporate targets

Council's Budget

Data Sharing Protocol

Clear report writing

403 LEISURE CONTRACT SPECIFICATION

The Chairman had agreed to accept this as an item of urgent business in the interests of the efficiency of the service.

A report was submitted by the Executive Member for Community Development, Leisure and Culture on the main elements of a specification for a tender for the Council's leisure facilities including Hartham and Grange Paddocks, Children's Activities, Castle Hall and the three school based joint facilities.

The Council wished to explore reducing the revenue spending on facilities by putting them on a commercially viable footing but keeping a community leadership role with regard to them.

The Council was committed to ensuring access to these facilities by the disadvantaged and vulnerable. The Council's principles were set out in the Cultural Strategy and the tender needed to contribute to the main outcomes of the Strategy.

ACTION

The Committee considered the headlines suggested for inclusion in the tender and commented on the difficulties which might be encountered. It decided to inform the Executive that the headlines should be approved but there was a need for realism in the specification if replies were to be received.

RESOLVED - that the Executive be informed that the Corporate Business Scrutiny Committee considers that the key headlines presented in the report now submitted should be incorporated in the specification for the new leisure contract but draws attention to the need for realism to ensure replies are received to requests for tenders.

The meeting closed at 10.10 pm.