



Minutes

Name of meeting	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and time	THURSDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2012 COMMENCING AT 5.00 PM
Venue	COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs Vanessa Churchman (Chairman), George Cameron, Rodney Downer, Paul Fuller, Heather Humby, Julie Jones-Evans, Ian Ward, Margaret Webster, Wayne Whittle
Officers Present	Sharon Betts, Steve Beynon, Dave Burbage, Paul Thistlewood
Cabinet members present	Cllrs George Brown, David Pugh

18. [Minutes](#)

RESOLVED :

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [16 August 2012](#) be confirmed.

19. [Declarations of Interest](#)

A general dispensation had been granted by the Appeals Committee on 5 September 2012 enabling members to speak in relation to the setting of the council tax which would form part of the discussions in minutes 21 and 22.

Councillor Paul Fuller declared a personal interest in minute 23 relating to items on the agreement to discuss with UKSA terms for its possible acquisition of Cowes Youth Centre and the disposal of former Gurnard Primary School, Hilton Road, Gurnard as he was on the management body of these two premises.

20. [Annual complaints report – analysis of closed complaints, learning outcomes and annual report from the local government ombudsman](#)

The Shared Services Manager, Sharon Betts, gave an overview of the content of the annual complaints report for 2011/12. In addition members considered the annual review letter from the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO)

With regard to complaints made to the council these had reduced from the previous year. There was however an increase in the number upheld either

fully or in part. Children's Services was the area where the highest number of complaints was upheld. Members believed that the annual report should be included on the council's website to highlight to the public as to how complaints were addressed.

The steps proposed to improve the complaints process were outlined. Members were advised of the importance of achieving learning outcomes from any complaint so that steps could be taken to improve service delivery. Where the council identified that it was at fault this was done at the stage one process and had resulted in a decrease of those going onto stage two.

A number of improvements to the content of the annual report were discussed. One area in particular that required additional information was that regarding services provided by contractors on behalf of the council.

The committee was made aware that for the first time the council had met the target for responding to requests for written information by the LGO. Additionally it noted that there had been no maladministration or injustice reports issued against the council.

RESOLVED:

- i. THAT the annual report for 2012/13 contain :-
 - a. More detailed information on categories and types of complaints;
 - b. Expanded details regarding complaints relating to services provided by contractors;
 - c. Benchmarking data;
- ii. THAT the intention to report on complaints relating to children's services and adult social care to the relevant scrutiny panels be noted;
- iii. THAT the relevant information relating to economy and environment complaints be reported to the relevant scrutiny panel;
- iv. THAT the annual complaints report be included on the council's website.
- v. THAT staff be congratulated on meeting the Local Government Ombudsman's target for responding to written enquiries.

21. **Budget review**

The Strategic Director of Resources gave a [powerpoint presentation](#) on the council's financial position, budget gaps, latest resources position and the budget review strategy.

This identified that the council's current budget strategy had placed it in a good position. As the result of the financial controls in place savings were being achieved and there was an anticipated additional saving of £2m. The

balances were healthy and it was important that these were not used for purposes other than specific one off items that would assist in key priorities.

An outline was given of the revenue budget forecasts up to 2016/17 and the implications of what was currently known about the overall funding of local government. The uncertainty of the implications of the business rates retention scheme, council tax support scheme and other related funding streams together with the other known main risks made the budget predictions extremely difficult. Members noted that the known budget gap for 2013/14 could be managed but the effect of the finance settlement would not be released by government until December 2012.

The committee discussed the use of £400k savings for a range of one off investment initiatives during 2012/13. The leader explained the balance between strengthening the council's reserves whilst supporting employment and economic growth. The amount of controllable expenditure, approximately £79m, was shrinking. The reductions being sought would put pressure on the council's ability to undertake discretionary services. In addition all statutory services would be reviewed to see where these could be made more efficient. There was a limit to the level of reductions that could be made in staffing levels.

Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that surplus land and buildings were disposed of promptly so that the capital receipts could be utilised. It was noted that the capital receipts programme could be affected in the future through the introduction of the community right to bid for assets of community value.

The demands being placed on the adult social care budget was mentioned. There had been a sharp rise in the previous three month period for care provision and the hospital had also experienced a similar increase in the level of demand.

The committee also debated the report due to be considered by the cabinet regarding the local council tax support scheme. Members stressed the need to raise public awareness of this matter. It was hoped that ward members could also assist in this process. An outline was given of the numbers of households involved together with the likely financial impact. The Strategic Director indicated that he had looked at other authorities proposals for dealing with this issue.

RESOLVED:

THAT the overall budget position for 2012/13 and future years be noted together with the actions being taken to mitigate against the implications of government changes.

22. [Comments on items due to be considered by the cabinet on 11 September 2012](#)

The committee was advised that the cabinet would not be considering a report on Newport Harbour to enable further legal advice to be obtained. In addition the decision regarding the disposal of Ryde theatre and town hall would be made by the cabinet member.

The only other issue to be debated by cabinet, apart from the budget and council tax scheme that had been covered in the previous item, was on the policy on the community right to challenge.

Members were informed of the support available to interested community bodies or staff led groups, both at local and national level. It was emphasised that this right related to a service where the body/group involved believed that it could operate more effectively at the same or lower cost. It was not for any service which was to be discontinued. It was intended that expressions would be invited by 31 December 2012 so that these could be taken into account when finalising the budget. In future years a July deadline would be set so that any proposals could be more fully assessed.

RESOLVED:

THAT the items due to be considered by the cabinet be noted.

23. [Forward Plan and Consultations](#)

Consideration was given to the forward plan for the period September 2012 to December 2012.

A query was raised in connection with the proposed delegated decision relating to the review of highway policies. It was also believed that the relevant scrutiny panel should have the opportunity of discussing the proposed waste strategy and the outline business case for the waste contract.

With regard to consultations there would be one due to commence on the local council tax support scheme as discussed earlier in the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- i. THAT members of the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel be given an outline of the policies to be contained within the forthcoming delegated decision relating to highway policies.
- ii. THAT a report on the key aspects of the waste strategy and outline business case for the integrated municipal waste contract be submitted to the Economy and Environment Scrutiny Panel.

24. **Progress report on recommendations and outcomes**

Members were updated on current progress with the actions and recommendations arising from previous meetings.

RESOLVED:

THAT the report be noted.

CHAIRMAN