



Minutes

Name of meeting	SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date and time	THURSDAY, 30 OCTOBER 2008 6.00 PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, ISLE OF WIGHT
Present	Cllrs Muriel Miller (Chair), Ivan Bulwer, William Burt, Vanessa Churchman, Deborah Gardiner, Gill Kennett, Erica Oulton, Lady Pigot
Co-opted Members (voting)	Mrs Sue Poston, Mr Charles Rogers
Other Members Present	Cllr David Pugh, Cllr George Brown
Educational Representative Members (voting)	Mr Adrian Smith (Parent Governor)
Officers Present	Mr Stuart Love, Mr David Burbage, Mr Alex Minns, Mr Paul Thistlewood, Miss Pakeezah Sponner
Apologies	Cllr Heather Humby, Cllr Margaret Webster, Mr Bob Blezzard, Mrs Sara Sheath, Mr Tony Blackshaw

39 **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the Minutes of the meeting held on [18 September 2008](#) be confirmed.

40 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations received.

41 **Anti-Social Behaviour Enquiry SC02/07**

At the last meeting of the Committee the report arising from the enquiry into anti-social behaviour had been endorsed and the six recommendations approved. This had been submitted to the Cabinet members for comment. Their responses to each of the recommendations were considered. Unfortunately the two Cabinet Members were unable to attend the meeting but the Director of Environment and Neighbourhood outlined several related issues.

The Committee expressed some disappointment with the responses but noted that a bid for some additional funding for related activities was being made for 2009-10. Combating anti-social behaviour was a key priority for the Isle of Wight Crime and Disorder Partnership.

RESOLVED:

THAT the responses be noted.

42 **Initial Budget Position and Strategy 2009/2010**

The Director of Finance gave a briefing by way of a powerpoint presentation updating the Committee on the Council's overall budget position for 2008/09 and the strategy for 2009/10. The Committee was reminded that the medium term budget strategy was for a three year period and contained details of anticipated investment, savings, growth areas, balances and council tax levels for up to 2010/11. The following key issues were highlighted :-

- Capital receipts would be £7.5m below original expectations over the 3 year period. The estimated capital receipt of £5.5m in 2008/09 had now been revised to £1m.
- Income would be reduced by £2m mainly due to less parking fee income; land charges search fees and lower number of planning applications.
- Concessionary Bus fares was likely to be £1m above the budgeted figure. Representations had been made by the Council and Southern Vectis regarding reimbursement arrangements. The Committee queried the cost of the Council operating beyond the national scheme and was advised that expenditure was marginal.
- Demand-led budgets, relating mostly to Children and Adult Services, currently forecasted additional expenditure of £1m. Funding of changes to service provision in areas such as the Fire and Rescue Service would have to be assessed against other key priorities.
- Capital programme required review again and priority given to schemes which could lead to revenue savings. Schemes not subject to specific grants may have to be funded by prudential borrowing.
- The Council was investing £5m in a Business System Improvement Project investment which would lead to savings of £27m in the longer term.
- A review of all Council property had been completed and would help identifying where the use of buildings could be rationalised although this may need some expenditure so that savings could be achieved in the longer term.
- Only essential posts would be filled and where possible this would be on an internal basis. A number of posts were being filled on a temporary basis and a review of the use of agency and temporary contracted staff would be undertaken.
- Council tax was capped by Government at 5% in 2008/09. The level for 2009/10 had not yet been announced but due to the economic climate could be at a lower level.
- Not all anticipated efficiency savings had yet been realised and efforts were being made to deliver the target of £5m. This would involve a slow down in expenditure and reappraisal of service needs in some areas.

Members were made aware of key dates for meetings leading to the Council Tax setting meeting on 25 February 2009. The Committee would receive a further budget update at its next meeting together with provisional projections at the meeting on 22 January 2009. Although each political group on the Council would receive briefings the Committee suggested that an all member briefing, should be arranged. In looking at the detail of the budget it was important to clearly understand the services which were of a statutory nature.

This would clarify those discretionary areas which could be prioritised based upon the needs of the community.

RESOLVED:

- (i) THAT a briefing be provided for all members on the Council's overall budget position and strategy for 2009-10 prior to the full Council budget setting meeting.
- (ii) THAT in presenting budget information an indication be included of those areas which are of statutory need and where there is an element of discretion.

43 Shanklin Theatre Operational Update

The Committee was reminded that it had called in a delegated decision in August 2007 relating to Shanklin Theatre. Although the decision had been implemented the Committee indicated at that time that it wanted to monitor the progress of the intended actions. In addition to Shanklin Theatre there were related issues concerning the future operation of Ryde Theatre.

Members were advised that all the actions proposed within the original Cabinet decision had been delivered on time. With regard to the subsidy required for Shanklin Theatre the amount of the subsidy appeared to be on course for being lower than that budgeted for.

The essential health and works to both Theatres had not been undertaken and had been put on hold to enable more detailed consideration to be given to the long term futures of both venues. It was indicated however that the facilities were still safe to be publicly used.

The Cabinet Member referred to an evaluation paper being produced by consultants on the future use of both facilities. The retention of these, and the associated costs, would have to be balanced against other service priorities. The proposed re-organisation of schools could also present an opportunity to review provision. It was anticipated that the consultants report would be received at the start of November 2008. The Committee considered that in the light of the budget position, as explained earlier in the meeting, there was a need for the Cabinet to make a decision on the future of the two theatres as soon as possible. In addition it would be appropriate to keep those people and groups, with a known interest in the theatres, informed.

RESOLVED:

- (i) THAT because of the financial impact of the Council's involvement in Theatre provision the Cabinet should consider the development options prepared by consultants as a matter of urgency;
- (ii) THAT the user groups, hirers and interested groups should receive a copy of the options paper prior to submission to the Cabinet but subject to any commercial sensitivity.

44 Undercliff Drive Implementation Plan – Monitoring Report

Members were updated on the progress with the range of actions arising from the Undercliff Drive Implementation Plan. It was noted that a large number of actions had been completed and should therefore be excluded from future reports.

It was noted that the Audit Commission had now fully reported back to the Audit Committee and had therefore completed the obligation placed upon it in accordance with the Implementation Plan.

RESOLVED:

THAT only the outstanding items be shown in the future monitoring reports.

45 **Performance Management Quarter 1**

The Committee formally received the responses to the queries raised in connection with the content of the performance management report for quarter 1 which was considered at the previous meeting and also by Cabinet at its meeting on 9 September 2008.

Members highlighted ongoing concerns about the completion rate for personal development plans which continued to be below target. Such plans formed part of the Performance Management Framework.

The response relating to recycling and landfill targets indicated the additional costs that would be incurred due to a delay in the gasification plant becoming operational. The Committee indicated that it was important that where there were financial implications arising from service areas where targets have not been achieved the projected financial implications should be outlined within the appropriate Cabinet member report.

RESOLVED:

THAT Cabinet members give consideration to identifying the financial consequences of all areas where performance is below target when producing their activity report attached to the quarterly performance report.

46 **External Scrutiny Protocol**

The Committee was advised of the responsibilities contained in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 for the scrutiny of partners engaged in delivering services contained in Local Area Agreements. To assist this, and following a meeting involving the Chairman, Mr Rogers and relevant officers, it had been agreed that a protocol should be drafted on the arrangements associated with this.

It was intended that the Island Strategic Partnership Board should consider the draft protocol prior to it being formally adopted by the Committee. The process for achieving this was outlined.

RESOLVED:

- (i) THAT the content of a draft external scrutiny protocol be prepared in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee together with Mr Charles Rogers and Cllr Margaret Webster;
- (ii) THAT the draft protocol be submitted to the Island Strategic Partnership Board for comment at its meeting on 26 November 2008;
- (iii) THAT the draft protocol be submitted to the Committee for endorsement at its meeting on 18 December 2008..

47 **Items regarding a decision not on the forward plan**

The Chairman reported, in accordance with the Constitution, on an item that had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 9 September 2008 which had not appeared in the Forward Plan. The matter related to the Government's programme of free swimming and the reason for it not having appeared on the Forward Plan was outlined.

RESOLVED:

THAT the action taken by the Chairman, in relation to an item requiring a decision that had not appeared on the Forward Plan, be noted.

48 **Forward Plan**

It was stated that the Forward Plan has improved compared to previous Plans. Too many items still needed more time to be considered. The Leader of the Council replied that before items are approved, the Cabinet want to be confident about what is proposed and sometimes additional external factors also delay the process.

RESOLVED:

THAT the Committee monitor the items contained on the Forward Plan that are moved from the original anticipated date of decision and challenge the relevant Cabinet Member on any item that slips on two consecutive plans.

CHAIRMAN