

REGENERATION AND CITIZENSHIP SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15th December, 2005 at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors R.J. Davis, Hinkley and Mead.

48 ELECTION OF CHAIR (REF: 1)

The Administrator sought a nomination for Chair. Councillor R.J. Davis was nominated but declined to take the Chair.

Councillor Hinkley was nominated but declined to take the Chair. The Committee was advised that in light of recent legal advice, it would be necessary for the Vice-Chair to take the Chair for the meeting. Councillor Hinkley agreed to take the Chair but specified that it would be for this meeting of the Committee only.

Resolved: That Councillor Hinkley be appointed Chair for this meeting of the Committee only.

49 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (REF: 2)

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors Hoyle, M. Hussain and Skepelhorn.

Councillor R.J Davis commented that both Councillors Hoyle and M. Hussain were dissatisfied with the meeting arrangements for Budget Scrutiny, and felt disenfranchised by the process, as they had to attend other scrutiny meetings that evening.

50 BUDGET SCRUTINY (REF: 8.1)

The Scrutiny Officer reported on the budget scrutiny process and referred to the protocol detailed in Appendix A. She explained that Members were recommended to consider the information presented and ask questions about the services and budgets included in the following documents:

- '2006/07 Draft Base Estimates'
- 'Officer's Draft Appraisal of New Potential Reductions'
- 'Officer Proposals for Exceptional and Unavoidable Cost Increases'

The Finance Officer gave a brief overall about the Council's budget settlement and the overall budget position.

In relation to the budget report Heads of Service introduced each section of the base budget and Members asked questions and officers responded as follows:

2006/07 Draft Base Estimates		
Reference	Questions/comments	Response
Chief Executive		
Support Service Charges	There appears to be a significant increase in the level of support services. Has the basis on support services and recharges calculation been changed?	This is not significant overall. Calculation has not changed, but the figure referred to was due to reallocation of work Finance Officer did not have the level of detail to comment further.
Unapportionable C'tral O'heads Supplies and Services	What does the variation refer to?	Best Values fees have been combined with audit fees for next year.
Head of Local Democracy		
Area Committees External Income	What do these figures refer to?	Neighbourhood renewal funding ceases.
Special Projects Supplies and Services	What are the special projects?	Finance Officer to get back to the Councillor.
Subscription Supplies and Services	What does this change refer to?	The LGA subscription has been transferred to another code.
Head of Communications		
Public Relations External Income	What does this change in income refer to?	It refers to the income from the sponsorship of roundabouts which has now transferred Street Services Division of the Environment and Regeneration Dept.

2006/07 Draft Base Estimates		
Reference	Questions/comments	Response
Special Projects Non Standard Details	What is this?	Finance Officer advised that this is in relation to Luton First, which doesn't have a budget as not a Council Service
Head of Corporate Policy, Performance and Cohesion		
Translation and Interpreting Service External Income	Is the income expected to fall?	The savings proposal increases the target income.
Director of Scrutiny		
	No comments/questions	
Head of Regeneration		
	No comments/questions	
Head of Environmental and Consumer Services		
Food Division Employees	What does the increase in the 'final next year estimate' refer to?	It is not an actual increase – the service has been operating with a number of vacancies this year and the figure assumes these vacancies will be filled.
Head of Leisure and Community		
Arts Development Supplies and Services	What does the difference between last year's spend and final next year estimate refer to?	Last year the service was slightly under-staff so did not spend as much.

2006/07 Draft Base Estimates		
Reference	Questions/comments	Response
Arts Development Total	Why are the figures increasing overall? Members requested a note on the Youth House Capital costs	There has been a slight increase in employee costs, asset costs have increased and a notional capital cost is incurred re Youth House. Finance officer to produce a briefing note.
Management and Administration Employees	What is the reason for the increase in the base estimate?	Community Development best value review resulted in an increase in the team which has been coded to 'Management and Administration'.
Other Adult Education Third Party Payments	What do these figures refer to?	The Learning and Skills Council contribute approximately £2.5 million to the adult education service. The council contribution is for half a post along will support service charges.

51 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, PART VA (REF: 9)

Resolved: That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting as it is likely that if members of the public were present during the items remaining to be considered, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information falling within Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

The remaining Minutes relate to business transacted when the meeting was not open to the public and contain exempt information within the meaning of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and have been excluded from the public record of the meeting. The following summary of the proceedings during which the meeting was not open to the public has been prepared in accordance with Section 100C(2) of the Local Government Act 1972.

52 BUDGET SCRUTINY (REF: 8.1)

The report set out the officers' proposals for 'exceptional and unavoidable growth' and their 'appraisal of potential reductions' together with explanatory notes about the options for increasing or reducing the base budgets.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

(Note: The meeting ended at 6.50 p.m.)