

FINANCE AND AUDIT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26 October 2010, at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00pm.

PRESENT: Councillor Mrs Knight (Chair); Councillors Edwards, Guest, Heath, Illingworth, Pittarello, Rhead, Mrs Sawdon, Mrs Tyrrell and Vincett.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mobbs (Portfolio Holder for Finance).

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Malcolm Doody.

60. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

61. **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2010, subject to minute 59 paragraph three being amended to say Dual Use Site intervention replacing Support Services Intervention, were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

62. **EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)**

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 29 September 2010.

Item Number 4 – Fees & Charges

The Committee undertook a thorough investigation of items or fees that were not clear and were satisfied with the explanations provided by officers.

The Committee noted the amendment to recommendation 2.6 that this would be delegated to the Head of Culture and would be a recommendation to Council.

The Committee noted the comments in recommendation 2.5 and paragraph 7.5.3 to seek sponsorship for Council parks and gardens and that this should be undertaken cautiously particularly in mind of the previous experience of sponsoring roundabouts.

The Committee felt that a further report should be brought to the Executive regarding the proposals contained in paragraph 2.9, but this recommendation should provide clarity that the intention is to stimulate the economy further by increasing the number of users of our services e.g. car parking and therefore potentially bringing more money into businesses rather than increasing our charges. In addition the report should include proposals regarding 10.6.1 (Charging for events on public spaces), 11.1.2

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(Building control fees) and those areas within Appendix B, Additional Charging Areas Item 4/Page 85.

The Committee were of the opinion that the charges for Warwick Response not be delayed and there was also a discussion surrounding payment methods.

The Committee felt that recommendation 2.8 be amended to read "Further fee increases be implemented from January of each year if this is practicable and/or appropriate"

The Committee recognised the difficulty that it was difficult to make increases at this time due to the expected increase in fees due to the increase of VAT.

The Committee sought assurance that where substantial increases have been made in fees, these are to cover the increase in cost to the authority or improved value for money and that these services when benchmarked were comparable with other authorities services and not just the charges.

(Councillor Mobbs left the meeting at the conclusion of this item.)

63. USE OF RESOURCES

The Committee considered a report from Finance that updated them on the progress made with regard to the Use of Resources Action Plan.

The Committee had asked for the report to monitor progress on the Use of Resources action plan and ensure that the Council was on track to achieve the Audit Commissions suggested improvements.

The Committee were of the opinion that all service areas should have completed the risk review sessions and the Committee asked to be notified at their November meeting of which services had not completed.

There was a discussion about the format of future reports. The Committee were of the opinion that at future meetings the reports should only report where targets were not being achieved. They asked the Head of Finance to consider this request as part of his next update.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Committee be notified at their November meeting of which services had not completed their Risk Review sessions;
- (3) the next update report be submitted in January 2011

(The Chairman had agreed to take this item as an urgent report because of concerns that it raised)

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64. EXECUTIVE AGENDA (NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS & REPORTS)

The Committee considered the following non-confidential items which would be discussed at the meeting of the Executive on Wednesday 29 September 2010.

Item Number 7 – Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee – Scrutiny Update

The Committee expressed significant concern regarding the proposed report in the Forward Plan about South West Warwick Community Centre Development which has been significantly delayed and in their opinion this report should be brought forward ideally before the end of the calendar year.

65. COMMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE

A report from Committee Services summarised the Executive's response to comments which the Finance & Audit Scrutiny Committee gave on reports submitted to the Executive on 29 September 2010.

RESOLVED that the contents of this report be noted.

66. FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services informing them of the current Forward Plan, attached as an appendix to the report.

RESOLVED that there were no forthcoming Executive decisions which they wished to have an input into before the Executive make their decision, at present.

67. REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME

A report from Members' Services detailed the Committee's work programme for 2010/11.

The Committee noted that there would be a Fit for the Future report to the Executive in November.

RESOLVED that the following amendments be made:

- (1) the work plan for 2010/11 be noted;
- (2) the quarterly report on the Procurement Strategy will now be brought in December;
- (3) a paper on work force numbers for the Council, detailing how many actual posts we had, how many were occupied, how many permanent posts, the number of temporary posts and the number of staff on secondments, be brought to the December meeting of the Committee;

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- (4) the Internal Audit Quarter 2 2010/11 report be brought to the December meeting instead of November;
- (5) the Enterprise Projects update be brought to the March 2011 meeting; and
- (6) Use of Resources update be submitted in January 2011.

(The meeting ended at 7.50 pm)