

BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

2.00 P.M.

7TH DECEMBER 2004

PRESENT: Councillors Keith Budden (Chairman), John Gilbert (Vice-Chairman), Tina Clifford, Chris Coates (substitute for John Whitelegg), Mike Greenall, Tony Johnson, Janie Kirkman, Peter Robinson and Roger Sherlock.

Officers in Attendance:

Roger Muckle - Corporate Director (Central Services) (Minute 17, 18, 19, 20)
Gillian Noall - Head of Administration Services (Minute 20, 21)
James Doble – Principal Democratic Support Officer
Liz Stokes – Best Value Officer (Minute 18 only)
Derek Whiteway – Internal Audit Manager (Minute 18 only)
Jenny Kay – Democratic Support Officer
Georgina Atkinson – Democratic Support Officer

Also in Attendance:

Ricki Boswell-Challand – Escendency (Minute 18 only)

Apologies for Absence:

Councillor John Whitelegg.

17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November 2004 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

18 PRESENTATION OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Liz Stokes, Best Value Officer gave a presentation to Members which detailed the Escendency Management Software that was currently being trialled within the Council. Members were reminded that the Council's CPA report had said that the Council had room to improve in this area and therefore had enlisted the services of a local company Escendency to provide the performance management software. It was reported that a pilot was being undertaken in City Contract Services and Environmental Health Services.

The Panel welcomed Ricki Boswell-Challand to the meeting who gave a demonstration of the software that was being trialled. Members asked several questions on the system regarding issues such as confidentiality, the adjustment of parameters, and the Customer Care Centre.

The Chairman advised the Panel that volunteers were requested to test the system further and it was agreed that Councillors Clifford, Gilbert and Whitelegg would undertake this.

Resolved :

That Councillors Clifford, Gilbert and Whitelegg test the performance management system further.

19 BUDGET PROCESS 2005/6

The Corporate Director (Central Services) updated Members on the current situation regarding the Local Government Finance Settlement that had been announced at the end of the previous week. It was reported that the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy had

expected a settlement of 1.5%, but the Government had allocated a 4.4% increase arising in additional grant monies of £354,000,

However these figures were only provisional at present and were yet to be finalised and it was not known if this would be a recurring rise.

Members were advised that the Government's cap on Council Tax rises was yet to be confirmed, but that it was expected to be set at a low single figure, probably 5%.

Members questioned whether the Panel could make recommendations to Cabinet on how this revenue could be channelled, and were advised that any recommendations could be made to Cabinet Members and that Senior Officers and Finance Officers were available to assist Groups with any budget proposals that they may wish to take forward.

The Panel was advised that Cabinet would be considering the draft budget at its December meeting and then presented to Council in February for their consideration. The Head of Financial Services had undertaken to keep the Chairman informed of the progress on the budget.

Resolved :

That the verbal update be noted.

20 CORPORATE GRANTS – SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Members considered a report of the Head of Administration Services which requested the Panel to review and monitor the Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with non-housing voluntary organisations, the increases that had been requested by some organisations and two new applications from Galloway's Society for the Blind and North Lancashire Counselling Service.

The Chairman welcomed representatives from some of the voluntary organisations included in the report and invited them to add any further information that may not have been included in their original reports.

(Councillor J. Gilbert and R. Sherlock declared a personal interest in respect of the following item.)

Citizens Advice Bureau, Lancaster

The representative from the Citizens Advice Bureau, Lancaster drew the Panel's attention to the Bureau's commitment to contribute to the Council's strategic objectives.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions of the representative.

Members noted the future funding requirements of the organisation.

(Councillor J. Gilbert and R. Sherlock declared a personal interest in respect of the following item.)

Citizens Advice Bureau, Morecambe and Heysham

Austin Staunton representing the Citizens Advice Bureau, Morecambe and Heysham, advised the Panel that the Bureau's annual report had been prepared and would be sent to the Council for consideration by the Grants Committee. It was agreed that the strategic objectives of the Bureau would also be forwarded.

Members asked questions of the work undertaken by the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Members noted the future funding requirements of the organisation.

Lancaster Disabled Information and Support Centre

As apologies had been received from the representative for Lancaster Disabled Information and Support Centre, Members agreed to note the future funding requirements of the organisation.

North Lancashire Victim Support

Pat Morgan, representing North Lancashire Victim Support, updated Members on the work undertaken by the organisation and its future goals.

Members noted the future funding requirements of the organisation.

Women's Royal Voluntary Service

As there was not a representative present for the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, it was agreed to note the future funding requirements of the organisation, subject to the agreement of the Service Level Agreement.

(Councillor R. Sherlock declared a personal interest in respect of the following item.)

Age Concern Morecambe and Heysham

Representatives of Age Concern Morecambe and Heysham gave a brief report on the history of the organisation. It was agreed that the representatives would supply further details of the funding requirements of the group.

Members noted the future funding requirements of the organisation.

(Councillor R. Sherlock declared a personal interest in respect of the following item.)

Age Concern Lancaster

As there was not a representative present from Age Concern Lancaster, it was agreed to note the future funding requirements of the organisation.

(Councillor R. Sherlock declared a personal interest in respect of the following item.)

Age Concern Lancashire

Geraldine Moore and a colleague from Age Concern Lancashire gave details of the recently established luncheon club in Carnforth for which the funding was required. Members were advised that the luncheon club was very successful and there was a waiting list to attend.

Members asked questions regarding the luncheon club.

Members noted the future funding requirements of the organisation.

(Councillor K. Budden declared a personal interest in respect of the following item.)

Lune Valley Transport Enterprise

Peter Smalley representing Lune Valley Transport Enterprise advised Members that the voluntary bus service in Lancaster would be ceasing shortly and Lune Valley Transport would take over this service as much as was possible.

Members noted the future funding requirements of the organisation.

Shopmobility (Preston Community Transport Ltd)

Brian Derbyshire, representing Shopmobility, updated the Panel on the pilot scheme currently being trialed in Carnforth for which further funding was required. Members asked questions regarding this issue.

Members noted the future funding requirements of the organisation.

Relate Lancashire

Vicky Cuthbertson, representing Relate, advised the Panel that the organisation had recently introduced a system similar to the one being piloted by the Council, to

measure performance indicators. This would mean improved figures would be available for the next year.

Members discussed the process of the funding required by the organisation to pay its rent to the Council.

It was proposed by Councillor T. Johnson and seconded by Councillor M. D. Greenall:

“That the Budget and Performance Panel request the Grants Committee to consider recommending to Cabinet that the grant for Relate Lancashire be tied to the rent paid to the Council and not inflation as it is currently.”

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the proposition, whereupon the Chairman declared the proposition to be carried.

Preston and Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council

As there was not a representative present from Preston and Western Lancashire Racial Equality Council, it was agreed to note the future funding requirements of the organisation.

Lancashire District Council for Voluntary Service (CVS)

Robin Cope, representing CVS, introduced himself to the Panel. The Head of Administration Services advised the Panel that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for the organisation had arrived late due to the expected standard of the SLA being higher than CVS had envisaged. It was reported that it was hoped that a joint SLA with Lancashire County Council would be agreed in the near future.

Lancaster and District Twinning Society

As there was not a representative present from Lancaster and District Twinning Society, it was agreed to note the future funding requirements of the organisation.

Sports Council – Individual Grants

As there was not a representative present from the Sports Council, it was agreed to note the future funding requirements of the organisation.

Sports Council – Youth Games

As there was not a representative present from the Sports Council, it was agreed to note the future funding requirements of the organisation.

New Requests

Galloway's Society for the Blind

Members discussed the request from Galloway's Society for the Blind for a new grant. It was reported that the organisation had applied before for funding, but had been advised that a £500 miscellaneous grant would be more appropriate.

Members discussed the request of the Galloway's Society for the Blind and it was suggested that the Society should be granted more than the maximum £500 offered with a miscellaneous grant.

It was proposed by Councillor J. Kirkman and seconded by Councillor T. Johnson:-

"That Cabinet be requested to consider a growth item of £1000 for Galloway's Society for the Blind."

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the proposition, whereupon the Chairman declared the proposition to be clearly carried.

North Lancashire Counselling Service

Members considered the new request from the North Lancashire Counselling Service and agreed not to make a recommendation to Cabinet on this request.

Resolved :

1. That the Panel considers that the information provided constitutes a satisfactory review in relation to each organisation's Service Level Agreement with the City Council.
2. That the Budget and Performance Panel request the Grants Committee to consider recommending to Cabinet that the grant for Relate Lancashire be linked to the rent paid to the Council and not inflation as it is currently.
3. That Cabinet be requested to consider a growth item of £1000 for Galloway's Society for the Blind as part of the 2005/06 budget process.

21 OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE

The Principal Democratic Support Officer presented a report which provided a background to Open Source Software (OSS) for Members to consider at the request of Councillor Whitelegg. Members discussed the proposal and suggested that a cost analysis would prove to be helpful in this exercise.

It was proposed by Councillor C. Coates and seconded by Councillor J. Gilbert:-

"That the Budget and Performance Panel recommend to Cabinet that the recommendations as set out in the report be agreed."

Resolved :

That the Budget and Performance Panel recommend to Cabinet that the following issues are included within the Information Services Business Plan for 2005/06:

a) Desktops

- Recommencing the pilot of Star Office 7.
- Evaluating the experience of Bristol City Council and the Council's own pilot.

b) Infrastructure

- Carrying out a review of OSS more generally, through considering and producing a report based on the recommendations of the e-Envoy following the OSS proof of concept trials as set out in Table 1 of this report. Including an analysis of the running costs of the current arrangements and projected running costs of an OSS alternative arrangements over a 5-year period (including training, updating, software licences, security and virus protection).

c) Joint Procurement

- Entering into discussions with other Local Authorities to consider the future joint procurement of software with a view to considering negotiating with OSS suppliers and Microsoft.

d) Outcomes

- That the Budget and Performance Panel receive a report setting out the results of a, b and c above in the year 2005/06 and consider whether they wish to recommend that to Cabinet OSS be pursued.

22 UPDATE ON HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The Principal Democratic Support Officer advised Members that a research brief was currently being prepared on this issue and would be circulated to the Head of Health and Strategic Housing in due course for comment.

23 WORK PROGRAMME

Members were requested to consider the Work Programme and it was agreed that it should be noted with the inclusion of consideration of the Council's budget in February, 2005.

Resolved:

That the Work Programme be noted.

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Chairman

(The meeting finished at 5.00 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Jenny Kay, Democratic Support Officer, Administration Services,
on (01524) 582065, or, alternatively, email jkay@lancaster.gov.uk**