

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

4.30 P.M.

12TH JUNE 2007

PRESENT: Councillors Jim Blakely (Chairman), Tina Clifford, Jean Dent, Keran Farrow, Sarah Fishwick, Mike Greenall, Tony Johnson and Ian McCulloch

Also in attendance:

Councillor Emily Heath
Elaine Charlton, General Manager, Williamson Park Ltd.

Apologies for absence:

John Whitelegg

Officers in attendance:

Nadine Muschamp	Head of Financial Services
Liz Stokes	Corporate Performance Manager
Liz Bateson	Senior Democratic Support Officer
Jon Stark	Democratic Support Officer

1 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman invited nominations for the Vice-Chairman of the Budget and Performance Panel for the current Municipal Year.

It was proposed by Councillor Greenall and seconded by Councillor Fishwick:

“That Councillor Johnson be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Budget and Performance Panel for the current Municipal Year”.

Resolved:

That Councillor Johnson be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Budget and Performance Panel for the current Municipal Year.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Johnson declared a personal interest in Item 4 of the Agenda ‘Scrutiny of Funding to Williamson Park’ as he was an appointed Member of the Williamson Park Board.

3 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th March 2007 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Chairman informed the Panel that he had agreed for the item entitled “Scrutiny of Funding to Williamson Park” to be brought forward in order not to detain the presenter of the item longer than necessary.

4 SCRUTINY OF FUNDING TO WILLIAMSON PARK

Elaine Charlton, General Manager of Williamson Park Board Ltd., delivered a presentation on the current work and developments at Williamson Park Ltd. with specific reference to the work of the company as requested under Minute 55 of the Budget and Performance Panel in 2006/07.

Members were advised that after the Park had been refurbished in 1988 and established as a small business it had expanded and now accommodated c. 125,000 visitors per annum and employed 38 members of staff. It was reported that the Park had strong support from local service users as well as accommodating a high number of tourists.

Williamson Park was primarily a facility for the Lancaster District and a lot of work was being carried out to further increase the local community utilising the Park's facilities, with a number of outdoor events aimed at people of all ages taking place over the summer months. It was also reported that plans had already begun for celebration events to take place during the Park's centenary year in 2009.

It was reported that the Park had a very active Friends Group who had most recently contributed to a new play area for younger children that had been sited away from the proposed site for an older children's 'assault course' type area. Members were advised that all new lighting installed to the Park had been selected for energy efficiency purposes.

Members queried if it was possible for the Park to apply for external funding and the Panel was informed that the company was constantly exploring funding opportunities and was currently in the process of application for lottery funding that they were hopeful of success with.

Resolved:

That the Panel notes the report.

5 CONSIDERATION OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Head of Financial Services presented the Item regarding proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Budget and Performance Panel. The Panel were advised that the proposals were in draft form and further consideration would be given in their development in light of expected guidance on the role of Overview and Scrutiny Committee and regarding performance management, and also in context of Audit Committee's Terms of Reference

It was also reported that the Terms of Reference would be made more specific to the aims of the Panel and would also incorporate additional training requirements to aid Members' effectiveness in divulging the information presented to them in Budget and Performance reports.

Members were advised that further developed revisions to the Terms of Reference would be presented at a future meeting for the Panel's consideration.

Resolved:

That the Panel consider a further revised Terms of Reference at a future meeting.

6 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Senior Democratic Support Officer presented a report to update Members with regard to the Budget and Performance Panel Work Programme and seek the Panel's views regarding items for inclusion in the Work Programme.

Members were advised that the final report of the Grants Task Group was due to be submitted to Cabinet in July and this contained recommendations that, if agreed by Cabinet, would raise items for the Budget and Performance Panel to consider.

It was reported that the next scheduled meeting of the Panel would be used entirely as a training session with the Audit Commission providing training on Data Quality and the Head of Corporate Strategy providing training on Performance Management.

Members were advised that the later meeting in July would include a review of the Efficiency Strategy, the Best Value and Performance Plan annual report and the interim report of the Home Working Pilot Scheme, as requested by the Panel.

It was agreed that following a request raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee a briefing note from the Head of Revenue Services would be circulated to all Members of the Budget and Performance Panel regarding the issue of payment of Council Tax within static caravan parks.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Panel agree to the Work Programme for the new Municipal Year.
- 2) That a briefing note regarding payment of Council Tax within static caravan parks be circulated electronically to all Members of the Budget and Performance Panel.

7 LEADER'S 4TH QUARTERLY CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

In view of the change in Leadership at the City Council the Corporate Performance Manager presented the 4th Quarterly Corporate Performance Monitoring Report. Members were advised that the report was produced from the Key outcomes on the performance framework from Cabinet portfolio holders, Heads of Service and Corporate Directors.

Members queried if the format of the reports could be improved and it was reported that the effectiveness of the reports was being reviewed and details of this would be reported back to the Panel. However, as detailed in the Work Programme, report training would be delivered at the next meeting to aid Members understanding of the information.

Members were advised that final year figures would be available from 30th June 2007. Members raised concerns over the number of failures to reach targets in Human Resources and queried whether this was due to a staff shortage. It was reported that Human Resources' workload had been significantly increased by the onset of the job evaluation process and they had now begun to reverse the downturn in some of their other work areas.

Members also raised concerns regarding the Consultation systems employed by the

Council and it was reported that a lack of corporate capacity had prevented the work from being entirely completed in the Municipal Year 06/07. However, a new Consultation Officer would be in post in July 07 and this should see the position rectified.

It was reported that the Council was anticipating an overall underspend of approximately £500,000, however, a number of carry forward requests for works earmarked for completion in 06/07 had been granted for completion in 07/08 and so this figure would be reduced to the region of £100,000.

The Head of Financial Services presented a summary of Major Variances reported the Performance Review Team process. It was noted that some services had not reported all their variances and these gaps would need to be clarified.

It was agreed that the Head of Property Services be asked to attend a future meeting of the Panel to explain the overspends by that service in the Municipal Year 06/07.

Resolved:

- 1) That the Head of Property Services be asked to attend a future meeting of the Budget and Performance Panel to explain the overspends by that service in the Municipal Year 06/07.

8 FORWARD ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

The Head of Financial Services presented a report to provide the Panel with details of the 2007/08 Forward Looking Annual Efficiency Statement. It was reported that the Council was exceeding its Gershon Efficiency Targets by over 15 per cent and also exceeding the percentage of this that needed to be cashable.

Members were advised that the Government had set overall savings at 2.5% per year, however, they were considering raising this to 3%, and this could potentially have an effect on local authority funding from Central Government.

Resolved:

That the Budget and Performance Panel notes the Annual Efficiency Statement submitted for 2007/08.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 5.17 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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