

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

4.30 P.M.

29TH JANUARY 2008

PRESENT:- Councillors Jim Blakely (Chairman), Tina Clifford, Jean Dent, Keran Farrow, Sarah Fishwick, Mike Greenall, Ian McCulloch, John Whitelegg and Peter Williamson

Also in attendance (part):-

Councillors Roger Mace, Evelyn Archer, June Ashworth Eileen Blamire, Susan Bray, Abbott Bryning, Roger Dennison, Jean Dent, Janice Hanson, Val Histed, Tony Johnson, Janie Kirkman, Malcolm Thomas and Paul Woodruff

John Ball (Clerk to Warton Parish Council), Phil Nichols and John Regan (Lancaster and District Chamber of Trade and Commerce)

Officers in attendance:-

Roger Muckle	Corporate Director (Finance and Performance)
Richard Tulej (part)	Head of Corporate Strategy
Nadine Muschamp (part)	Head of Financial Services
Liz Stokes (part)	Corporate Performance Manager
Andrew Kipling (part)	Accountant
Jon Stark	Democratic Support Officer

44 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman requested nominations from the Panel for a new Vice-Chairman. It was proposed by Councillor Greenall and seconded by Councillor McCulloch:-

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

A further nomination for Councillor Fishwick to be appointed was proposed by Councillor Williamson and seconded by Councillor Clifford.

Members voted on the nominations.

Resolved:-

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

45 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made at this point of the meeting.

46 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 27th November 2007 and 15th January 2008 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

47 BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK PROPOSALS

The Leader of the Council delivered a presentation on the City Council's draft Budget and Policy Framework Proposals. It was reported that the development of the proposals had included a wide internal and external consultation and had been modified by Cabinet and Council and were subject to further modification prior to the Corporate Plan's formal adoption at Full Council in April 2008.

Members were advised that the proposals were developed to continue the Council's aims to meet its Medium Term Objectives, with a particular emphasis on keeping the City Council element of Council Tax increase to acceptable levels.

It was reported that 2007/08 had seen the establishment of Customer Service Centres at both Town Halls to improve service accessibility and the Council had increased use of information technology systems used by staff to further develop a service culture that embraced transformational change.

Members were advised that the Council worked closely with the Community Safety Partnership to deliver crime reduction targets and continued to develop the sustainable Regeneration Programme throughout the district, based on the economic vision and strategy. The Council had been particularly effective at attracting external funding to deliver the economic vision and strategy.

It was reported that the Council continued to develop local responses to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change and further develop local communities that influenced and had a greater involvement in service delivery and decision making. The Panel was advised that 2007/08 had seen the piloting of Neighbourhood Management Techniques in rural areas following the success of the schemes in the Poulton and West End areas of Morecambe.

It was reported that the budget proposals met the Council's target for a rise on Council Tax of 4.5%, aided by a number of savings proposals that had been agreed in Star Chamber meetings throughout the Municipal Year. Members were advised that these included a saving of £40,000, anticipated through a change in concessionary travel policy across the country, and there was also a small projected saving in parking permits that had been revoked following recommendations by the Panel.

The Leader reported a number of growth proposals scheduled for the next three years including additional staff and support for Regeneration and Cemeteries administration following recommendation by the Cemeteries Task Group. It was noted that there were further growth proposals, particularly in improving children's services and supporting the sanctuary scheme for victims of domestic violence, which had been funded by other sources and, consequently, had no impact on Council Tax.

Members were advised that further budget meetings would take place culminating in Budget Council, due to take place on 27th February 2008, when Council Tax for 2008/09 would be agreed and the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme would be subject to approval.

The Leader answered a number of questions on the Cabinet's Budget and Policy Framework proposals from the Panel and representatives from other organisations. Members raised concern for the 2009/10 budget should the capital receipts projected for the sale of Council assets not be realised. It was reported that the robustness of the Capital Programme in light of such implications was due to be considered by the Panel at its meeting on 26th February 2008.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Leader be thanked for his presentation and that Cabinet's Budget and Policy Framework proposals be noted.
- (2) That a report be brought before the Panel at its meeting on 26th February 2008 detailing the robustness of the financing of the Council's Capital Programme.

The meeting adjourned at 5.29 p.m. and reconvened at 5.35 p.m.

48 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Democratic Support Officer presented a report to update Members on the Panel's Work Programme. Members were advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had referred 3 items for the Panel's consideration following their discussion with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Housing, namely:-

- (1) That the Budget and Performance Panel be asked to look at non-priority repairs in Council Housing and Councillors be asked to inform Democratic Services of any cases they are aware of.
- (2) That the Budget and Performance Panel be asked to look at the budgetary issues regarding the funding of building conversions in the West End.
- (3) That the Budget and Performance Panel be asked to consider the adequacy of social rented housing provision in the District.

Members of the Panel agreed they had not received enough detailed background information regarding the requested items to add them to the Work Programme. It was agreed that Overview and Scrutiny and relevant Officers be requested to provide briefing notes with additional information concerning the rationale and scope of each piece of work regarding the items referred for further investigation.

Members were advised of a future training event that would be hosted at Lancaster Town Hall on Monday, 10th March 2008. It was reported that the session would be conducted by Frances Taylor and would deal predominantly with issues of Local Authority Budgets and Performance Management.

The Panel was advised that following a request at the Panel's meeting on 15th January 2008, information regarding all free and subsidised parking permits authorised by the City Council would be included in the parking report that was already due for consideration at the next meeting on 26th February 2008.

Members discussed the information received from the Head of Economic Development and Tourism regarding the contractual status of the Storey Creative Industries Project. It was agreed that an update report on the development with the contractual status of the Storey Creative industries Project be requested for the Panel's consideration at its next meeting.

Resolved:-

- (1) That briefing notes be requested providing additional information concerning the rationale and scope of each of the following pieces of work, referred from Overview and Scrutiny for further investigation:-
 - (a) That the Budget and Performance Panel be asked to look at non-priority repairs in Council Housing and Councillors be asked to inform Democratic Services of any cases they are aware of.
 - (b) That the Budget and Performance Panel be asked to look at the budgetary issues regarding the funding of building conversions in the West End.
 - (c) That the Budget and Performance Panel be asked to consider the adequacy of social rented housing provision in the District.
- (2) That Members note that additional information regarding all free and subsidised parking permits authorised by the City Council will be available as part of the parking report due for consideration at the meeting on 26th February 2008.
- (3) That Members note the upcoming Overview and Scrutiny training event taking place at Lancaster Town Hall on Monday, 10th March 2008.
- (4) That an update report on the development with the contractual status of the Storey Creative industries Project be requested for the Panel's consideration at its next meeting.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 5.49 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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