

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

6.00 P.M.

30TH NOVEMBER 2010

PRESENT:- Councillors Roger Sherlock (Chairman), Roger Dennison, Emily Heath and Elizabeth Scott

Apologies for Absence

Councillors John Whitelegg (Vice-Chairman), Evelyn Archer and Keran Farrow

Officers in attendance:-

Suzanne Lodge	Head of Health and Housing
Mark Davies	Head of Environmental Services (part)
Andrew Clarke	Accountancy Services Manager
Keith Hawcard	Repairs & Maintenance Manager (part)
Jenny Kay	Democratic Support Officer

28 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting that was held on 7th September, 2010 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

29 COUNCIL HOUSING RESPONSIVE REPAIRS BUDGET

The Repairs & Maintenance Manager presented a report which provided Members with information relating to the overspend on the Council Housing Responsive Repair Budget for 2009/10. The report also highlighted the actions that would be taken to monitor the expenditure in 2010/11.

Members were advised of the statutory obligations the Council had, as landlord, to carry out repairs to the Council's housing stock and relevant legislation. These included keeping the structure and exterior of the dwelling in repair, keeping the installations for supply of water, gas, electricity and sanitation in proper working order and keep the installations for space heating and water heating in proper working order.

It was reported that in 2009/10 there had been an overspend because there had been a considerable increase in the number of void properties, increasing from 352 in 2008/09 to 423 in 2009/10. This had resulted in an increase of £211,381.38 over the year. As Council Housing Services had identified the void turnaround as a top priority within its business plan in order to maximise rental income, this work had been undertaken as a priority to allow properties to be re-let as soon as possible.

The Committee was informed that other contributors to the overspend were issues such as lift repairs, high levels of sickness resulting in external contractors being employed and emergency repairs to boilers.

Members were then advised on what measures were being implemented to improve monitoring and control of expenditure of the responsive repairs budget in 2010/11. This included :

- No fencing repairs unless there were health and safety implications.
- Not using external contractors.
- Close monitoring of the responsive repairs budget and splitting it into sub codes.

- Monthly meetings between the Repair and Maintenance Manager and Financial Services to monitor the budget.
- Journals now undertaken monthly rather than at year end.
- Strict appliance of the Sickness Absence Policy and stressing the importance of good attendance to the workforce.
- New management within the service would improve productivity and process

Members discussed the incentive scheme for tenants which currently paid £75 if they kept their property in good repair prior to leaving. It was suggested that this could be raised to £100 as a pilot for a year.

Resolved :

That the report be noted.

30 SUSTAINABLE STAFF TRAVEL PLAN UPDATE

Members were reminded that the Committee had discussed the potential for a Sustainable Staff Travel Plan at its meeting on 13th July 2010. The outcome of this was a request that Cabinet consider a workplace travel plan using the specifications in BSI PAS500:2008 and the definition of the Department of Transport and to also identify any budgetary implications arising from this.

The Head of Environmental Services provided an update on this piece of work. It was reported that Officers had met with Lancaster University's Environment & Travel Co-ordinator to discuss their travel plan. Members were reminded that the Council's Corporate Plan made no provision for the delivery of a workplace travel plan. To produce a plan the Council would need to employ a full time officer to undertake the work.

Members discussed how this work could be taken forward.

Resolved :

That Budget and Performance Panel note the level of resources and budget required to deliver a workplace travel plan as requested at a previous meeting.

31 PENSION LIABILITIES

Members considered a briefing note on Pension Liabilities that had been requested following issues raised at the meeting of the Panel on 8th June 2010.

The briefing note included summaries of forecast pension costs over the next 5 years which related to early retirements prior to March 2008 and included 'added years' that had been granted under the previous Local Government Pension Scheme. The costs for the recent restructure were also given but these had been funded from the restructuring reserve and not directly charged to the revenue budget. The Panel was advised that there was no relationship between the cost of voluntary redundancy or pension liabilities as each were calculated separately.

Members went on to discuss how pension liabilities could be reduced. As the Accountancy Manager was to attend a briefing on the outcome of the latest actuarial review, it was agreed that a further briefing note would be prepared incorporating some background on the size of the pension fund deficit, how the pension fund operates from an employer and employee point of view, and what discretion there is over contributions from both parties.

Resolved :

That the Panel be provided with a further briefing note incorporating some background on the size of the pension fund deficit, how the pension fund operates from an employer and employee point of view, and what discretion there is over contributions from both parties.

32 WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic Support Officer presented a report detailing the Panel's Work Programme. Members considered a request from Councillor John Whitelegg to include an item on the Work Programme on underspent budgets.

The Panel went on to discuss the three briefing notes that were circulated to Members of the Panel on Feed In Tariffs Scheme, LDLSP Second Homes Funding and Corporate Review of Service Level Agreements. It was agreed that more information was required on the Feed In Tariffs Scheme particularly in terms of how the City Council could deliver such a scheme and what other local authorities were undertaking.

With regard to the Affordable Housing Task Group, Members were advised that the go ahead had not been given on this piece of work as the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review were not yet known. It was suggested that Democratic Services could set up the Task Group to save time.

Resolved :

- (1) That underspent budgets not be included on the Panel's Work Programme.
- (2) That the Chief Executive be requested to arrange for a report on Feed In Tariffs to be provided to the Panel which gives more details on how the Council could deliver such a scheme, including details on what other authorities are undertaking and that this be timetabled into the Budget and Performance Panel's Work Programme.
- (3) That Members note the items to be carried forward for consideration at future meetings as details in Appendix A to the report.
- (4) That Overview and Scrutiny be asked to request Officers to consult groups about membership of the Affordable Housing Task Group with a view to setting up the Task Group as soon as possible so that its work can be completed by April 2011.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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