

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

6.10 P.M.

24TH FEBRUARY 2015

PRESENT:- Councillors Tony Anderson (Chairman), Dave Brookes (Vice-Chairman), Margaret Pattison (substitute for Richard Newman-Thompson), Elizabeth Scott, Roger Sherlock (substitute for Janet Hall), Keith Sowden and Susan Sykes

Apologies for Absence:-

Councillors Chris Coates, Janet Hall and Richard Newman-Thompson

Also in attendance:-

Councillor Abbott Bryning Cabinet Member (invited for minute 31)

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Cullinan	Chief Executive (minute 34)
Sarah Taylor	Chief Officer (Governance) and Monitoring Officer
Andrew Clarke	Financial Services Manager
Mark Cassidy	Planning Manager
Debbie Chambers	Democratic Services Manager
Stuart Hampson	HR and OD Manager
Robert Bailey	Corporate Planning and Performance Manager
Stephen Metcalfe	Principal Democratic Support Officer
Chris Woodhouse	Performance and Development Officer

26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 27th January 2015 were signed as a correct record.

27 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no items of urgent business.

28 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

29 BUILDING CONTROL TRADING ACCOUNT AND ALTERNATIVE TRADING OPTIONS

The Planning Manager presented the report updating the Panel on the progress being made to make alternative arrangements for the operation of the Council's building control operation. He advised Members that the author of the report, the Chief Officer (Regeneration and Planning), had sent his apologies for the meeting.

The Panel was informed that the City Council had been formally investigating the setting up of a shared service for building control with South Lakeland District Council (SLDC). However SLDC had advised verbally in January 2015 that there was an insufficient business case to enter into a shared service operation with the City Council and the report advised of three possible options that were available at this point. The Planning Manager explained the difficulties with two of the options and why option 2, to maintain and resource the City Council's statutory building control duties in house and to seek to outsource the application handling process on as close to a cost neutral basis as possible, was the officer preferred option.

Members asked several questions about the non-statutory building control functions, outsourcing work, and the difference between the City Council and the private sector services.

The Panel noted the report and it was proposed by Councillor Sherlock and seconded by Councillor Scott: -

"That the Panel recommends Option 2 to Cabinet."

The Panel voted in favour of the proposition and the motion was carried.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Panel notes the position taken by South Lakeland District Council in relation to investigations into the potential for a shared building control service.
- (2) That the Panel recommends Option 2 to Cabinet.

30 VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH SECTOR COMMISSIONING (VCFS) – REVIEW OF ACTIVITY

The Chief Officer (Governance) presented her report to the Panel. The Corporate Planning and Performance Manager and Performance and Development Officer were in attendance to respond to questions.

The report provided the Panel with feedback on the current commissioned contracts within the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector.

The Panel noted the cessation of One Voice and that Council officers were in the process of considering options regarding the support of potential provision to meet the needs that the contract with One Voice had provided.

It was proposed by Councillor Margaret Pattison and seconded by Councillor Scott: -

"That the report be noted."

Members voted in favour of the proposition.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

31 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING 2014/15 QUARTER 3

The Panel considered a joint report from the Chief Officers (Governance) and (Resources) presenting the corporate performance and financial monitoring reports and other supporting statements for quarter 3 of the 2014/15 performance monitoring cycle. Councillor Bryning, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance, was in attendance for this item.

The Chief Officer (Governance) and Corporate Planning and Performance Manager presented the performance information and responded to questions. The issues raised included: -

- The format in which the information was presented to the Panel, and why this had changed from tables to a narrative.
- The number of affordable homes for the district.
- The 'Splashpark' water feature at Happy Mount Park.

The Panel was pleased to note that there had been an increase in the number of people participating in sports and leisure activity.

The Financial Services Manager presented the financial monitoring information and responded to questions regarding: -

- Current situation regarding the recovery of money invested in Icelandic banks.
- A change to the City Council's banking provider.
- Underspending position for the General Fund 2014/15.

Councillor Bryning reminded Members that sessions of Treasury Management training had been arranged for June 2015 and attendance would be especially relevant for all Members of the Panel.

The Panel agreed to note the report.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

32 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2015/16

The Financial Services Manager introduced a report seeking the Panel's views regarding the proposed treasury management framework for 2015/16.

Members asked questions regarding the City Council's debt limit and interest rates from overnight and longer term investments, which the Financial Services Manager responded to.

The Panel unanimously agreed to note the report.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

33 WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

The Principal Democratic Support Officer updated Members on the Panel's work programme.

The Chairman asked for the Panel's views on two issues in particular. Firstly, whether the Panel wished to monitor the existing Arts Service Level Agreements (SLAs) or to carry out future monitoring, to be included in the work programme at the same time as the Arts Commissioning Framework.

Councillor Scott, seconded by Councillor Margaret Pattison, proposed that the monitoring activity be for "future monitoring". A vote was taken and this was unanimously agreed.

The second issue that the Chairman raised was regarding the annual Lancaster Fireworks Spectacular, part of the Light up Lancaster event. Panel Members were asked to consider whether they felt it appropriate to request a briefing note about the processes and costs of appointing an external provider for the event, prior to considering whether the matter should be added to the Panel's work programme.

Councillor Brookes, seconded by Councillor Sherlock, proposed that a briefing note be prepared by officers and this was agreed unanimously when put to the vote.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Work Programme report, detailed in Appendix A of the report, be noted.
- (2) That future monitoring of the Arts Service Level Agreements be carried out by the Panel, to be included in the work programme at the same time as the Arts Commissioning Framework.
- (3) That a briefing note be requested from officers regarding the processes and costs of appointing an external provider for the annual Lancaster Fireworks Spectacular.

34 COMPLAINTS PROCESS - ELECTED MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

The Chief Executive attended for this item, to present his report seeking the Panel's view on Elected Member involvement in the City Council's complaints process.

The report set out the current two stage complaints procedure, which did not involve Elected Members at either stage, and an option for a third stage of appeal, which would be for Councillors to consider the complaints that had been completed by officers and where the next stage of appeal would be to the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Chief Executive drew Members' attention to the comments of both the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151, cautioning against any proposal for Elected Members to be involved in the complaints process, other than as advocate for a ward resident.

Two Councillors expressed the view that Members should not be involved in the complaints process and this should be a matter dealt with by officers only.

The Panel raised the following issues, which the Chief Executive responded to:

- The volume of complaints received each year.
- Why the suggestion of involving Members in the complaints process had arisen and where from.
- The feasibility, or otherwise, of referring level 2 complaints to Cabinet.

Councillor Sherlock proposed, seconded by Councillor Scott: -

“That the status quo be maintained regarding the Council’s complaints process.”

The proposition was agreed when put to the vote.

Resolved:

That the status quo be maintained regarding the Council’s complaints process.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 7.00 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact
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