

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 6 April 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor James, in the Chair.

Councillor Ball, Vice-Chair.

Councillors Browne, McDonald, Nicholson, Ricketts, Thompson, Wildy and Williams.

Co-opted Representatives: Doug Fletcher and Jake Paget.

Also in attendance: Councillor Bowyer, Cabinet Member for Finance, Property, People and Governance, Chris Randall, Finance Client Manager – Capital and Major Projects, Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance Assets and Efficiencies, Ian Gallin, Assistant Chief Executive, Jane Keeley, Strategic Procurement Manager, Paul Chapman, Head of Value for Money and Efficiency, Chris Trevitt, Head of Capital and Assets, Mairead MacNeil, Assistant Director for Children's Social Care, and Maggie Carter, Assistant Director for Learner and Family Support..

The meeting started at 2 pm and finished at 5.15 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

124. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the code of conduct.

125. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

Delivery Plan for Partnership, Governance and Scrutiny Arrangements

The Chair sought Members' permission to discuss the new proposals for partnership, governance and scrutiny arrangements, following consideration of the scheduled agenda items.

Agreed.

(In accordance with Section 100(B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 the Chair brought forward the above item of business because of the need to consult Members).

126. **'INVEST TO SAVE' INITIATIVES AND FINANCIAL UPDATE**

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board considered the report presented to Cabinet on 29 March 2011, paying particular attention to –

- the four new 'invest to save' initiatives
- continuation of the Carefirst project
- the rolling out of phase II of the Accommodation Strategy

Prior to looking at each scheme in detail, Members' attention was drawn to the fact that some of the figures in the report, relating to the Carefirst project, were incorrect. These were corrected as follows –

Paragraph 4.2

Total Capital Expenditure should read £2, 323,000
 Total Revenue Expenditure should read £2,545,000

'Implications' section of the report

Capital Programme project summary table -

Carefirst Total should read £2,323,000
 Overall Total should read £7,175,000

Members expressed concern that this information was now in the public domain and suggested that an amendment be circulated in time for consideration of the report at City Council on Monday.

At a time of rising costs and reducing resources, Members welcomed the principle of 'invest to save' initiatives. However, when considering the report in detail, and hearing from each of the project lead officers, Members felt the need to highlight the following –

- (a) that there was no direct correlation between each scheme and the City priorities;
- (b) there was a danger that the 'invest to save' fund would be used to address corporate efficiencies rather than taking a strategic approach to investment;
- (c) Cabinet had more to do to correctly interpret the recommendation arising from the budget scrutiny process which had been for scrutiny to be involved in the governance arrangements around 'invest to save';
- (d) they felt unable to form a view on each scheme without –
 - having first seen the established criteria for 'invest to save' schemes
 - knowing how projects were scored
 - details of the running balance and how it was to be funded
 - knowing the benefit/outcome to be achieved

- (e) that in order for the benefit of these, and any future schemes, to be measured, the information identified at (d) above was essential and ought to be included in the quarterly update on Performance and Finance and in future 'invest to save' proposals presented to scrutiny.

Whilst Members noted and endorsed Councillor Bowyer's proposal that ongoing review of the progress on 'invest to save' schemes should form part of the regular financial reporting cycle, disappointment was expressed at the quality of this particular report in that it failed to provide the necessary information required for them to form a view on the schemes contained therein.

Agreed that –

- (1) an amended version of the report, taking account of the corrections made to the Carefirst total expenditure, is circulated in advance of City Council on 11 April 2011;

Recommended that –

- (2) the information set out at (d) above is included in all future 'invest to save' schemes.

127. **CALL-INS**

Transfer of Freehold for Nomony Children's Centre

With reference to minute 91, the Democratic Support Officer reported that, following consultation with ward members, the Cabinet Member's decision had not altered and had now been implemented.

128. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

Delivery Plan for Partnership, Governance and Scrutiny Arrangements

The Chair presented to the Board draft proposals for new partnership, governance and scrutiny arrangements. Members were informed that –

- (a) the purpose of bringing the proposals to the meeting today was to launch the consultation;
- (b) any comments/feedback on the proposals would be welcomed prior to formal discussion taking place at a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to take place after the local elections.

Initial concerns raised related to –

- the ability to hold Cabinet to account and particularly being able to challenge/question individual Cabinet Members
- loss of opportunity for Members to build up skills and knowledge by serving on individual scrutiny panels

- locality working

The Chair further commented that he and/or the Lead Officer would be happy to attend each of the political group meetings to provide a formal briefing on the proposals.

Further to minute 122a, Councillor McDonald reminded Members that there was still opportunity to respond to the 'Review of Statutory Duties Placed on Local Government' consultation on the Communities and Local Government website.

Agreed that the link to the 'Review of Statutory Duties Placed on Local Government' consultation is circulated to Members of the Board by the Democratic Support Officer.

129. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.