

RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 27 JANUARY 2005

Present: - Councillor M A Gayler - Chairman
Councillors A Dean, R T Harris, V J T Lelliott, A J Ketteridge, A R Row, S C Jones, M J Savage and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance: - A Bovaird, M Cox, S Mclagan, P O'Dell and T Turner.

RE67 WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed Tracy Turner, the new Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) to the meeting.

RE68 APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R P Chambers.

RE69 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2004 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

RE70 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute RE55 – Cinema at Saffron Walden County High School

The Executive Programme Manager (Quality of Life) informed the meeting that a working group had been established to progress the cinema project. It was meeting on a monthly basis and was currently working on the creation of the Trust and forming the business plan.

ii) Minute RE61 – Staff Communication and Morale

Members were advised that there would be a report to the next cycle of meetings. The Chief Executive informed the Committee that Unison would be balloting members on strike action against the proposed pension changes. He would keep members abreast of any developments.

iii) Minute RE63 - Transport Plan

Councillor Dean hoped that the recommendations in this minute were being actively pursued and asked for a progress report to a future meeting.

RE71 RESOURCES COMMITTEE SERVICE PLANS BUDGET AND COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) presented a report, which provided the basis for finalisation of the Committees General Fund budget for 2005/06 subject to consideration of the Council's overall budget and any amendments made by Full Council. The Committee was given

details of the base budget that had been updated since the previous meeting to take account of transfers between committees and new targets in relation to the Gershon review and joint working.

Following the resolution at the Council meeting on the 14th December the spending pressures for this Committee had been reviewed. They now reflected the Council's priorities and included provision for additional resource to address the central corporate capacity of the Council. Councillor Row questioned this expenditure, in particular the £50,000 for additional support for the Leader of the Council, £33,000 for a new accountant and £25,000 for an assistant to support the Executive Programme Manager.

The Chief Executive explained that the current workload was too great for the existing arrangements and this affected the ability of senior managers and members to carry out their roles effectively. The proposed new post of Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive would research and analyse external reports, anticipate policy developments and provide background information for strategic meetings. It was expected that the post would be an internal secondment.

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) explained that the number of staff in the accountancy section was very low compared to other authorities. The authority needed the ability to plan finances long term, to deal with strategic issues, to have an input into Corporate Plan projects and to explore opportunities for external funding. There was currently no capacity to take on these important tasks. With regard to the Programme Assistant, the Executive Programme Manager (Quality of Life) required support to enable her to develop projects in the Corporate Plan. This would be a shared resource with the new Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance).

Councillor Ketteridge commented that the current staffing problems appeared to be a result of the recent management restructuring exercise. Other members said that there had been a long term under resourcing of the corporate core and the Council was now struggling with a major strategic agenda. It was important that the Council had the ability to respond to developments.

The Committee then considered the spending pressures that were proposed for reduction, deferment or deletion. Members questioned the deletion of £100,000 for the Access to Service review. Officer said that provision had been made in the Capital Programme, but figures from other local authorities suggested that it was reasonable to expect that the project would be revenue neutral.

The report also set out the one off spending pressures relating to this Committee. These mainly concerned initiatives to improve the management of staff resources. Members agreed that improvements were necessary and thought this might be an area where resource sharing with partners could be looked at.

The Committee then considered the savings/additional income targets for each of the Committees services and the options to achieve them. In some cases, particularly those close to the corporate core, no savings could be

achieved without a reduction in service. In relation to Democratic Representation officers were asked for an analysis of the cost of member representatives on outside bodies. Under the printing service, Cllr Ketteridge asked for details of the cost of printing the recent publication, Uttlesford Life.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the base budget for 2005/06 be approved
- 2 The proposed approach to spending pressures be approved.
- 3 The following budget reductions/additions be agreed
 - £8,500 – rationalisation of minor budgets relating to the Accountancy and Exchequer service
 - £15,000 –restructuring of IT service as a result of the resignation of the Executive Programme Manager(Access to services)
 - £13,000 –increase in Land Charges fee income
 - £5,000 – reduction in budget for external legal services
 - £4,000 – reduction in budget for external legal costs
 - £4,000 – rental income due from County Council following agreement to locate road safety staff at UDC office
 - £500 – minor reduction in stewarding costs of offices, in the context of proposed additional spending pressure of £10,000
 - £11,000 - reduced telecommunications expenditure through the introduction of the GMS gateway
 - £10,000 – greater commercialisation of the printing service
 - £10,000 – increased income through fraud subsidy
 - £13,330 – deletion of Fraud Admin Support post
 - £9,340 – increase in Benefit Administration Grant.
 - £4,000 - microfilming
 - £13,200 – deletion of scale 5 post in Revenues Admin
 - that budget reductions totalling £59,130 from the information and revenue/benefits service be accepted from the 2006/07 financial year via returning externally managed services in house, and that the base budget for that year be adjusted accordingly.
- 4 The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) to prepare an overview statement of the headline achievements of this budget process in terms of finance and budget improvements in time for the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm